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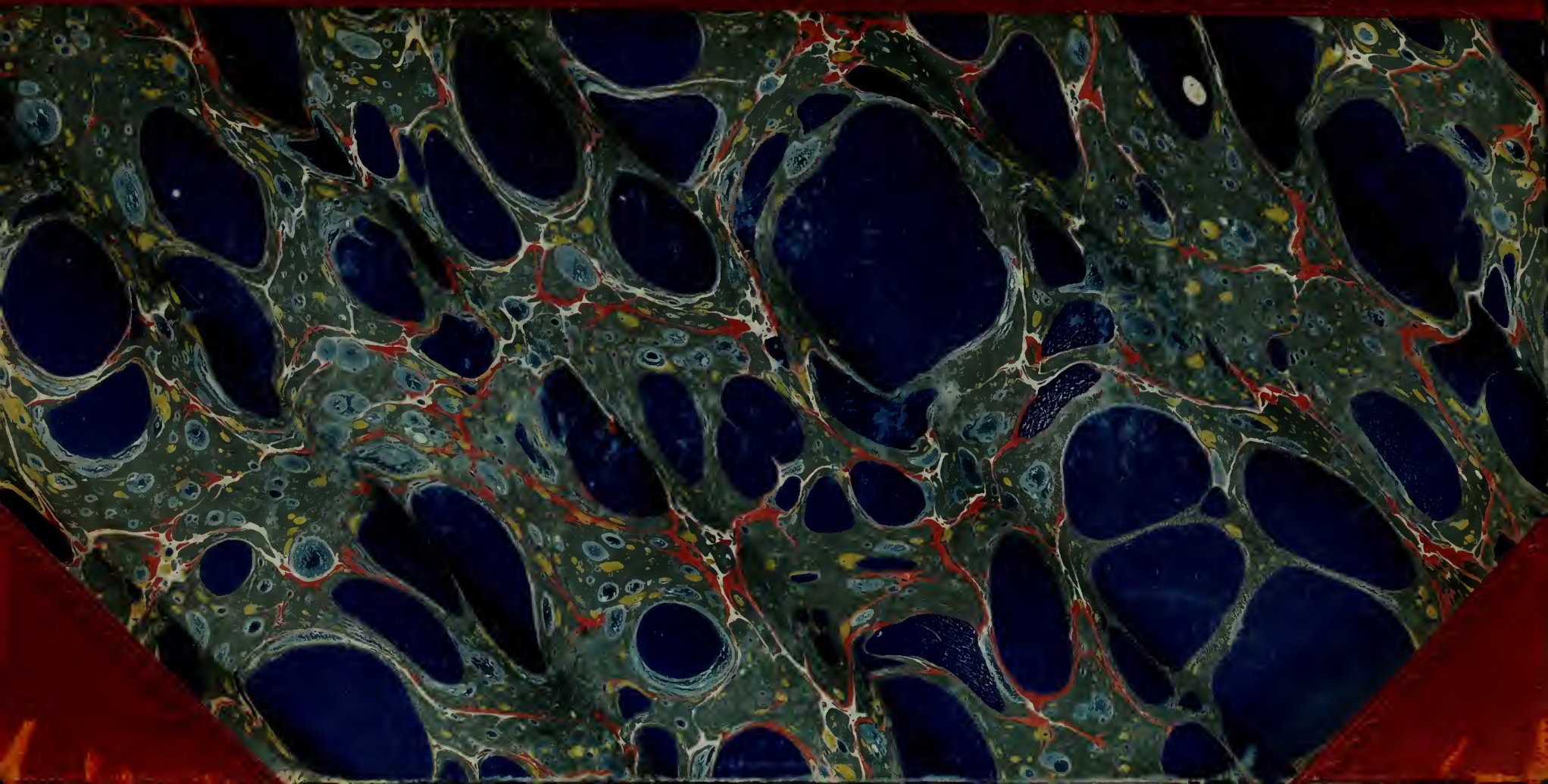

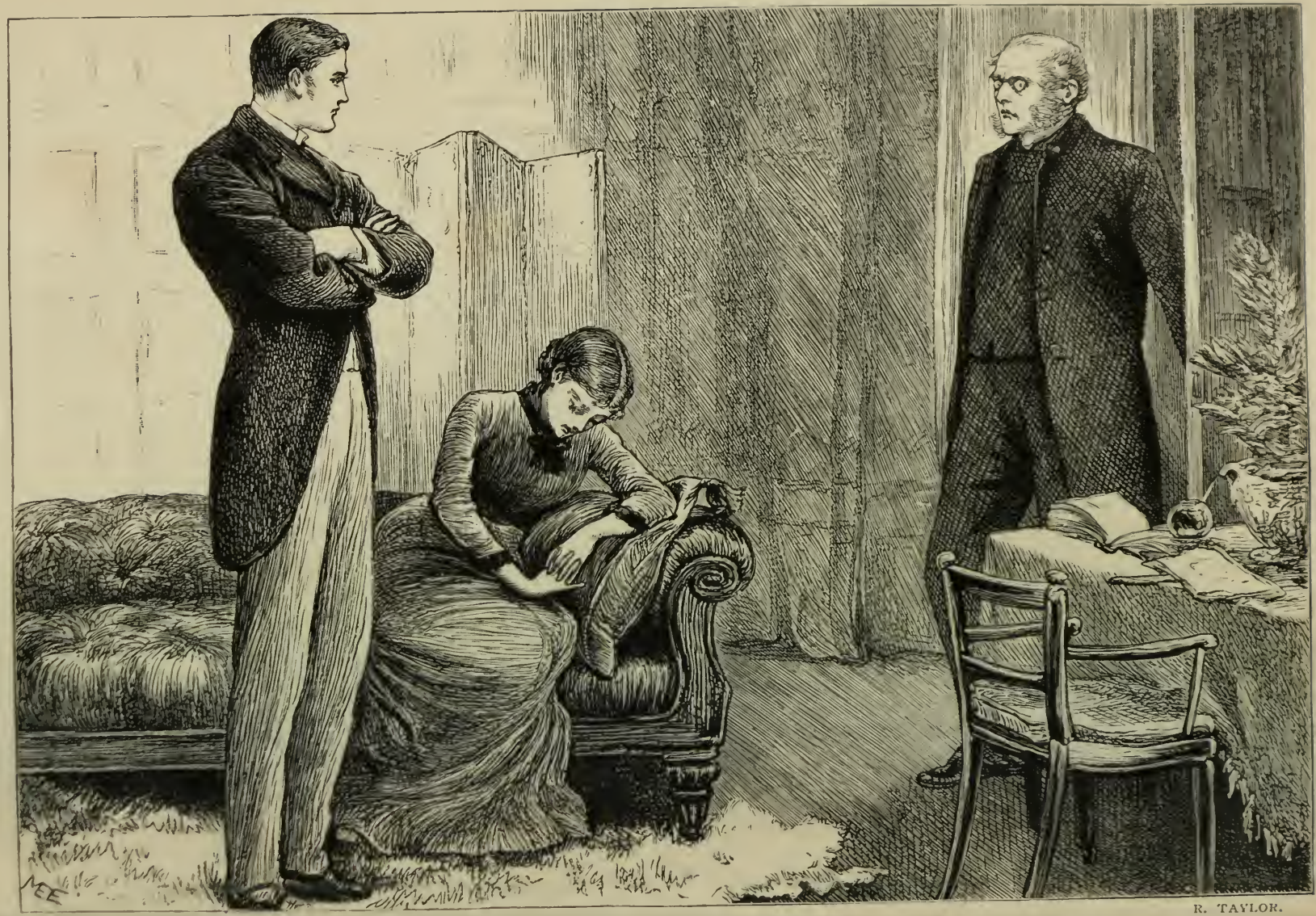

M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOLUME XLIV.

July to December, 1887.

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By M. Ellen Edwards.

"I am glad you have the modesty to acknowledge that you are briefless."
"As he stood thus thinking, the room door was slowly pushed open, and Regina appeared."
"Oh, Gertrude! don't say me nay again!"

By Frank Dadd.

"It is not possible that you mean to kill me!"
"By George, Lindrick," old Redburn had said to the Colonel, "it seems that you misled me about young Earle."
"He came upon the happy group."

AND

Illustrations to "Letters from Majorca."

THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER X.

THE SUB-DEAN.

MARY DYNEVOR lay awake the whole night, thinking over what she ought to do, as she had expressed it. To her father she could not speak: she dared not do so; his temper was fiery, his authority absolute, she was utterly in awe of him. And to speak to him would be utterly useless; nay, worse than useless, for at the slightest hint of reluctance on her part, he would have forced the marriage on.

No; if broken off at all, it must be done without the knowledge of Dr. Dynevor. She could only see one way out of the dilemma—to throw herself on the generosity of Sir Everard: but she shrank from the prospect of doing this, and when she rose in the morning she was as much perplexed as when she had gone to rest.

But every hour of indecision only added to the difficulty. Sir Everard would be coming again in the course of the day to see her, his promised bride. What was to be done, must be done without delay. Miss Dynevor announced herself better, and said that she should chaperon her nieces to the evening's engagement, which they had been afraid of missing. They were speaking of it when Sir Everard called in the afternoon.

"We can get you a card also, Sir Everard," spoke up Miss Dynevor. "The Laysons will be delighted to see you."

"You are very kind. I fear I must decline. Just yet I do not wish to join in any gaiety," was his answer.

A thought occurred to Mary, and she nerved herself to its execution—if she could only find the chance of doing so. It came to her when they were standing together at the window, their backs to the room.

"I have a favour to ask of you," she whispered, tremulously. "It is not my intention to go out to-night: will you come here and spend a quiet half-hour with me?"

"Thank you, Mary. I will come."

"Do not mistake me," she hurriedly added. "I *must* speak with you alone; and it is the best opportunity I shall have as far as I can see."

The Sub-dean was engaged that evening to a clerical dinner, and Miss Dynevor departed with her nieces at the appointed hour, all three much surprised at Mary's suddenly proclaimed resolution of remaining at home. They had scarcely gone, when Sir Everard Wilmot entered. And now came Mary's task.

She did not know how to begin it. She was absent and agitated. Sir Everard could not fail to observe her strangeness of manner. "What is the matter?" he inquired.

A strange, wild rush of red illumined her cheek, and she clasped her hands tightly one over the other; so tightly as to cause pain, had her mind been at ease; then she got up and stood by the fire: all in the effort to nerve herself to her task: it must be done. Now, or never.

"I have a communication to make to you, Sir Everard ——"

"*Sir* Everard!" he interrupted, standing near her.

"And I don't know how to do it," she continued, unmindful of the reproof. "Had you been any other than—than—what you are, I could not have made it."

He did not speak now. He glanced at her shrinking air, her downcast face, her nervous hands; and waited to hear more.

"I have been very wicked; very wrong. I have let things go on, suffering you to believe that I would—that I was going to marry you: and I find I cannot do so."

A dead pause. Sir Everard thought that he had never seen anyone so confused; so painfully agitated. "I do not understand you," he said. "But I think you had better sit down," he added gently, leading her to the sofa, on which he took a place beside her.

"It is your coming home which has awakened me," she continued, scarcely knowing what she spoke. "Indeed, I did not mean to do wrong, or to act dishonourably: but when you came yesterday evening—then—I found—that I could not marry you."

Sir Everard thought it a singular avowal; especially singular, as made to him.

"Let me tell you all," she resumed, gathering some courage now the ice was broken, as nervously sensitive people will do. "I found I did not love you; that it would be wrong to myself, and doubly, doubly wrong to you, if I fulfilled my engagement and married you; and I lay awake all night, thinking what ought to be my course. I did not dare tell papa; he is very severe, he would not have listened to me; and I—decided to—tell you; to ask you to give me up. It is what I am now trying to ask you to do."

She sat now with her hands clasped before her, looking down at them, a sort of helpless look upon her face. Sir Everard was silent.

"I knew how good you were, how considerate, how honourable, and it gave me courage to speak to yourself, to show you my unfortunate position, and to ask you to be generous, and let the refusal to carry out the marriage, come from you. Oh, Sir Everard," she added, bursting into tears, "I do like and esteem you very much; and it nearly breaks my heart to have to say this."

"You must forgive me, if I repeat that I do not understand you," he said in a low, kind tone, "and your last words less than all. You 'like and esteem me,' but you do not love me? I am quite content to take the esteem and the liking, Mary; to trust that the love will follow."

"It never will," she almost vehemently answered, lifting her eyes to his for a moment in her eagerness. "It cannot do so."

Another pause: her face was bent again, and she had turned crimson to the roots of her hair. A light dawned upon the baronet.

"You love another!"

"Oh, forgive me," she whispered. "It was not willingly done: it seems to have come on without my having been aware of it. He did not know it, either—until last night when you came. At least—at least—he had never spoken of it."

"You have betrayed yourself; I suspect unwittingly. You speak of Mr. Baumgarten!"

She had indeed betrayed herself, and certainly not intentionally. It did not tend to reassure her.

"Why did you accept me?" asked Sir Everard.

"Why, indeed!" she murmured. "But I did not know that I was doing wrong. I liked you very much, I admired and respected you; you were so different, so superior to the frivolous men we mostly meet. It is true I did not love you, and even then I knew that I liked—only liked, mind—Charles Baumgarten; but I thought it would all come right in the future. I was acting in a species of dream or bewilderment, which was the effect your offer had upon me. I had taken a wrong view of your frequent visits to us—you see I am telling you all—and that alone would have kept me from caring for you in a different way, had there been no other impediment."

"What wrong view had you taken up?" inquired Sir Everard.

She hesitated for a moment, and then spoke in a low tone. "I fancied you came for the sake of Gertrude Baumgarten."

"Gertrude Baumgarten!" he repeated in a curious intonation. "Gertrude would not have cared for me."

"Gertrude *would*—as I truly believe now."

"Nonsense, Mary! Gertrude Baumgarten was wrapt in that Italian prince—who had more money than brains."

Mary shook her head. "She did not care for him; and when he asked her to be his wife she refused, and felt surprise, I think, at his proposal. After it was all over—I mean when I had accepted you and we were away, and on our return home again, an idea came over me

that it was you Gertrude had really cared for. I was not sure; and I judged it better not to continue the train of thought: but, this I know, Gertrude has never been quite the same girl since. I suppose I ought not to tell you this: I fear I am forgetting myself in more ways than one."

Everard Wilmot paused. "Do you know, Mary," he said, "that this communication in regard to yourself places me in a very painful position?"

"I can only throw myself upon your generosity; only plead for your forgiveness."

"Putting aside the question of my private feelings, you place me in a most embarrassing and painful position towards Dr. Dynevor. He expects that I have come home to marry his daughter; I expected it; the world expects it; and what can be my excuse for refusing? Can I go to him, hat in hand, and say, 'Sir, I am tired of your daughter: I do not intend to marry her?'"

She caught up the silk flounce of her evening dress, and rolled it about in thought as she spoke. "How can it be managed? what can be done? Oh, Sir Everard, can you think of no plan? you are so much wiser than I."

"You seem to assume confidently that I must consent to the breaking up of my cherished plans; to summarily resigning my promised wife."

She looked very much distressed. "What *can* I do? Can I marry you, liking someone else?"

"Having promised to be my wife, was it right that you should cultivate so much the society of Mr. Baumgarten?"

"You do not understand," she hastily said. "It was not right; but you do not quite understand. We have always been very intimate with the Baumgartens; my youngest sister was named after Lady Grace; and Charles has come here as freely as our own brothers have come. I did not think of any danger, I don't think Charles did, it is your coming home which has shown us the truth."

"You wish me to understand that you and Mr. Baumgarten are irrevocably attached to one another.

There was a risk of the flounce being pulled into shreds, and Sir Everard scarcely caught the confirmative answer.

"Then will it not be better to tell the simple truth to Dr. Dynevor? I do not suggest this to avert unpleasantness to myself, but ——"

"It is the very thing that must not be done," she interrupted, in agitation. "Charles Baumgarten is as yet too poor to ask for me, and papa would go wild at the bare idea of it. He of course considers it a most desirable thing—oh pardon me for having to say all this—that I should—should—become Lady Wilmot, and I dare not tell him I object. I thought if you could do it—as if the objection came from you—you would not be afraid of him, for he could not be harsh

and peremptory with you, as he would be with me. I know it is a great boon to ask of you," she added, her eyes filling again, "but—if you knew how unhappy, how perplexed I am—perhaps you would not refuse to help me."

"You forget one thing," he returned, in a low tone, "that the odium of being refused had far better fall upon me than upon you. The world is not generous in these matters, but I can fight it better than you can."

"I forget all things," she answered, "but the bare fact before me—that I must not marry you, and dare not confess to papa the true cause. The world can only say that you repented of your engagement to me. Let it do so."

Sir Everard was silent. He knew that the world's ability to say it would not prove so pleasant as she thought. "I must have time to consider this," he said, rising. "I will see you again to-morrow morning."

She rose also, and stood before him as a culprit. He took her hand.

"I hope you will forgive me; I hope you did not like me very much," she whispered, raising her repentant eyes to his.

Her words and manner almost amused him, they were so truthful and childlike. "I do like you very much," he answered, with a smile; "too much to part from you without a pang of regret and mortification."

"But you will get over it," she eagerly said, "very soon, I hope."

"It will be the second case of a similar nature I have had to get over," he returned, possibly surprised out of the confession, possibly making it with deliberate intention. "I was going to be married in my early youth, or what seems early youth to me now. I was four-and twenty."

"And she refused you?" whispered Mary.

"No; she died. All the love I had to give, died with her, and I had only liking left for anyone else. I had none, even of that for a long while, for years after she died. 'Wilmot never means to marry,' people used to say, 'he must have taken a vow of hatred against women.' They little thought he had once loved one too much. Do not be ungenerous, and fancy I retort this confession upon you in requital for the one you have given me; it was always my intention to make it before we were married, more fully than I have now done."

Mary Dynevor's face was raised, her lips were parted with eagerness. "Then—if I understand you rightly—you have not really loved me?"

"In the imaginative sense of the term—no. Only—I quote your favourite words—liked you very much. But my wife should never have felt the want of that ideal love."

She looked almost beside herself with joy. A rosy flush suffused her cheeks, a light came to her eyes, and she positively clasped Sir Everard's hands in her own. "I am so thankful!" she burst forth,

"I am so happy! If you do not love me, why no great harm has been done, and we can still be friends. Oh, Everard, let us be friends! There is no one in the world I would rather have for a friend than you; and you will be Charles's friend also, and let him be yours."

"Perhaps—after a little while."

"Yes, after a little while. As soon as you can; as soon as you can forget my ingratitude and ill-doing. I know I have behaved badly, and I do beg your pardon. I am very happy, and shall now say to myself over and over again: 'It is not all over and done with, we shall still be friends.'"

He fully understood what she meant to imply, though it was not expressed in the most lucid manner. Like a candid child, she had spoken out her mind unreservedly, and Sir Everard went away, regretting that this candour was not inherent in all girls.

The revelation she had made to him inflicted no deep wound. When a man or a woman has gone through the phases of the passion called love, and survived it, deep wounds are over. A strangely bright dream while it lasts; sweet, pure, heavenly; far too much so for this earth: to all else of which it stands in contrast. Few men—or women either—are organised to experience it; *their* love is not this love, and let them be glad that it is not. It had done its work on Everard Wilmot, and had gone; quite, completely gone, scarcely leaving its remembrance; but it had taken with it the inward springs of imaginative existence; poetry, ideality, pure passion; all that stands in contradistinction to hard reality. Henceforth he could make the best of this matter-of-fact, work-a-day world, and strive on for the next; but he knew that there was no more life for his heart, no more thrill, no more hope, no more satisfying happiness. No, no; deep wounds were over for Sir Everard. The song had left the bird.

What does Byron, that great master of the heart's life, tell us in one of his poems? Have you forgotten it?

> "But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,
> Is first and passionate love. It stands alone,
> Like Adam's recollection of his fall:
> The tree of knowledge has been plucked; all's known;
> And life yields nothing further to recall
> Worthy of this ambrosial sin: so shown
> No doubt in fable as the unforgiven
> Fire, which Prometheus filched for us from Heaven."

Surely yes! Nothing in this world, but that alone, can impart any idea of what Heaven's bliss will be.

Beyond that confession of his own past life, Sir Everard could have made another had he chosen to do so—that his second essay in love, the "liking," had not been given to Mary Dynevor but to Gertrude Baumgarten. He met Gertrude for the first time when she

was on the Continent with her mother. He was strangely attracted to her; and he took to frequenting the house of Lady Grace.

One evening he spoke to Gertrude. Or, it may rather be said, that he hinted he should like to speak. She stopped him at the outset, scorn on her beautiful face, resentment in her voice, as she bade him be silent and not so speak to her again. Mr. Wilmot bowed and obeyed. But the wish to settle down, to have a home and a wife in it, was strong upon him. As a Frenchman says, "Je vais me ranger," so said Everard Wilmot; and, while smarting under Gertrude's rather premature refusal, he wrote to ask for the hand of Mary Dynevor.

Therefore, as the reader will readily perceive, this confession of Mary's did not carry a great sting with it; and Sir Everard was enabled to consider with calmness what kind of communication might be made to the formidable Canon.

On the following day, after breakfast, Sir Everard called at Eaton Place. He saw Mary, and went straight from her presence to that of Dr. Dynevor. There, after shaking hands, he quietly said that differences had arisen between himself and Miss Mary, and they had mutually agreed to part.

Never, perhaps, was a Canon so astounded, never did one feel more outraged, and—if we may venture to say it of a divine, coveting in all his heart a Deanery—never was one in a greater passion, though he controlled it.

"What was the cause?" he demanded.

"The precise cause, he and Miss Mary Dynevor had agreed to keep to themselves," was the answer of the baronet. "It was sufficient to say that they were both fully convinced a union between them would not conduce to their happiness, and they had come to the conclusion not to carry it out."

Sir Everard said as little as he could and left, and then up rose the fiery Dynevor wrath. It was let loose on the family in conclave: Miss Dynevor, Regina, Mary and Grace. What the Sub-dean said in his passion is of no consequence, and if he might have been fined (had he been before a magistrate) a few small sums of five shillings each, we won't transcribe the fact, out of respect to the feelings of any other Sub-dean who may chance to read this. Miss Dynevor and two of her nieces were simply confounded, not so much at the ebullition of anger, as at its cause; Mary could only shiver in silence, and inwardly pray that it might pass away.

"I will know the truth," foamed the Canon. "Why do you part?"

"Differences," gasped Mary, who had taken her cue from Sir Everard.

"Differences be — be — forgotten!" stammered his reverence. "What differences?"

"Nothing that I can particularly explain," faintly returned Mary.

"We found that a marriage between us would not lead to happiness, and we parted."

"*Won't* you speak out?" cried he, bringing down his clerical shoe upon the carpet.

"That is all I have to say," she answered, drooping her head.

"I am to understand, then, that Sir Everard Wilmot declines to carry out the engagement?"

"Yes." She had slightly hesitated at the answer, but it appeared to her that she must give it, for want of a better.

"Very well," cried Dr. Dynevor, as he quitted the room and shut himself into his study. This gave Miss Dynevor and the girls an opportunity of enquiring on their own account. Question after question they poured out on the unhappy Mary, but they did not succeed in getting from her any solution to the mystery: which of course bore an ill appearance.

"I very much fear it is a case of jilting," groaned Aunt Ann. "If the days of duelling were not past, one of your brothers ought to go out and shoot Everard Wilmot. Dishonourable craven!"

Mary's cheeks burnt: the "jilting" had been on her side, not his: and it was great pain to hear this epithet applied to one so generous and upright.

Miss Dynevor's anger, however, could do neither harm nor good: but, unfortunately, Dr. Dynevor's could, and he had adopted precisely similar sentiments in regard to Sir Everard. It did not occur to him to surmise that a young lady who had waited hopefully (as he concluded) for the return of her bridegroom to claim her, would be likely to refuse him as soon as he appeared, therefore he laid all the blame at his door and not hers. A very few days, and then—something like a thunder-clap burst forth on Mary. Her father was entering an action against Sir Everard Wilmot for Breach of Promise.

"Oh, Aunt Ann," gasped Mary, appearing before Miss Dynevor whiter than a sheet, "what can be done?"

Intensely provoked at the state of affairs altogether, Miss Dynevor declined to say. In point of fact she did not know.

"Has papa *really* entered an action against him?"

"How can I tell what your papa has or has not done?" retorted Aunt Ann. "If he has not done it, he will do it; be sure of that. My brother Richard is the most obstinate man living. Once his mind was set upon a thing when a boy, you couldn't turn him, and I'm sure you can't now."

"But think of the dreadful scandal, Aunt Ann!"

"*You* should tell him to think of that."

The possibility of concealment was all over now, as Mary saw; and she dragged herself, in fear and sickness to his presence. "Is it true that you have done it?" she gasped; and the Sub-dean was at no loss to understand her meaning.

"It soon will be true. The man shall be held up, a spectacle to the world."

"Oh, papa, you must undo it, you must undo it! Do not lose a moment. It was not Sir Everard who broke off the engagement; it was I."

The Canon felt rather savage. He had only just come from a pitched battle with Miss Dynevor upon this very point, his will conflicting with hers: Miss Dynevor was decidedly against the action, and told him it would be derogatory to his daughter and disgraceful to himself. Of course he did not listen to her; he never listened to anyone who opposed him; and he believed that his sister had now been sending Mary to him with an assertion that was not true.

"You may go back to your aunt," said he, "and tell her to mind her own business, and I'll mind mine."

"I did not come at my aunt's instigation, papa. It was from Regina I heard the news; and I have come to you to tell you the truth: it might have been better to tell it you from the first, as Sir Everard wished to do."

The Sub-dean stared at her through his great ugly spectacles, for he had been reading a letter when she interrupted him. "What do you mean about 'the truth?'" he sternly asked. "What is the truth?"

She laid her arms upon the back of a chair and seemed to lean her weight upon it: he saw that she was trembling. "The truth, papa, is that I refused Sir Everard; so that if an action might be brought on either side it would be on his. He came home to marry me; but I—I—could not marry him: and he was so kind as to let it appear to you that it was as much his fault as mine."

"*You* broke it off? Of your own accord?"

"Yes," she answered.

Dr. Dynevor paused to collect his senses; perhaps his temper. He took his daughter's hand, placed her in a chair, and took up his standing before her, staring right into her face.

"Your reason for doing that, young lady?"

"Oh, papa, I cannot tell you," she said, bursting into tears.

"Your reason?" he repeated. "You do not stir from my presence till you have given it to me."

She was terrified at his stern tone, terrified at what the future might have in store for her, terrified altogether. Better let him know the truth and get it over, a voice seemed to whisper to her. "Papa," she breathed, bending her face down upon the arm of the chair, "I —I liked some one else better than Sir Everard."

"You liked ——" The Canon stopped: indignation and astonishment overmastered him.

"Who is it?" he demanded, in an awful voice.

She did not answer. What he could see of her face looked as crimson as his own sometimes was. "Who is it, I ask?" he

repeated : and shrink and shiver as she would, there was no evading that resolute question.

" Charles Baumgarten."

To attempt to describe the state of feeling of Richard Dynevor, Canon and Sub-dean of Oldchurch Cathedral, would be a task beyond any modern pen—for we take stings and checks more soberly now than we used to do. What with his condemning anger, with her aunt's covert reproaches, with the vexation, the suspense, and the distress the affair had brought her, and the knowledge that she and Charles Baumgarten were parted for good, Mary's mind could not bear up against it, and she became seriously ill.

Dr. Dynevor condescended to call upon Everard Wilmot, who had taken up his abode at the residence in Grosvenor Place, formerly his father's house, now his own. The Canon was in a frightful state of wrath at the turn affairs had taken, but he was a just man on the whole, and went to retract, in a manner, the reproaches he had bestowed upon Sir Everard.

" I was wholly misled, you see, Wilmot; and I'm sorry I said as much," he began, which was a wonderful concession for him. " Girls capable of acting in the capricious manner my daughter has done, ought to be made to smart for it. She took *you* in, of course, as she did me."

" Why, yes, she did," replied Sir Everard. " I'm very sorry for her, sir. I hear she is ill."

" Sorry ! Ill ! " retorted the indignant Canon. " Let me tell you, Sir Everard, if she were ten times as ill as she is, she deserves no pity. My opinion is, you should have kept her to her bargain. However, the time for that is past now."

" Quite so," spoke Sir Everard.

A curt letter, couched in the haughtiest of terms, reached Charles Baumgarten's chambers in Pump Court, from Dr. Dynevor, forbidding him all further intercourse with the Dynevor family.

" I know the old boy can do the thing in style when he brings his mind to it, but this is super-extra, Charley," remarked Richard Dynevor, who chanced to call in Pump Court soon after the missive was delivered. " Cheer up, lad; things may take a turn."

It was not from her son Charles that Lady Grace heard the news of the rupture of the engagement, but from Everard Wilmot himself. He called in Berkeley Square and told her what had occurred.

" The marriage broken off !—not going to take place at all ! What can be the reason for this ? " cried Lady Grace, fair and handsome as she ever had been in the days gone by.

" We have mutually agreed upon it," he replied.

" But *why* have you done that ? There must be some cause for it Sir Everard."

"I think," he said, lowering his voice, "you had better ask Mary for a reason."

"Then, was it *her* fault?"

"It was not mine. At least, not—not altogether. Dear Lady Grace, although I have come expressly to tell you this, I do not feel at liberty to speak more fully," he added, in a quicker tone. "I think you will be quite sure to hear the truth from the Dynevors, and then I can be more explicit as regards myself."

"Well, I am very greatly surprised," she said. "But I don't think it appears to have broken your heart."

"Hearts are elastic, and don't break so easily," replied Sir Everard, with a half smile.

After he left, Lady Grace sat buried in a reverie. Her daughter, who had been out, found her so.

"Mamma," exclaimed the latter, "how serious you look!"

"I was thinking, Gertrude. Everard Wilmot has been here to tell me some news: his engagement to Mary Dynevor is at an end."

"Oh, indeed," said Gertrude, carelessly: but she turned crimson.

"And his manner, as he told me, has set me wondering," continued Lady Grace. "My dear, I don't believe he cares one bit about it; I am inclined to suspect there was not the smallest particle of love in the matter—on either side. Take care! What are you about, Gertrude? —leaning out of the window like that!"

"I was looking at the accident at the corner of the square; a horse has fallen down," was the composed reply of Gertrude.

And a few weeks passed on.

Mary Dynevor was not dying, no one said that; but everyone did say that she was wasting away. The Sub-dean, haughty, cold and implacable, would not see it; Miss Dynevor had begun to speak of it complainingly; Regina and Grace grieved. She had a touch of low fever, and seemed unable to struggle out of it.

Mary chiefly lay upon the sofa; she was too weak to sit up throughout the day. Smarting under the displeasure of her father, obliged to submit to the querulous remarks of her aunt, who rarely ceased to grumble at the rupture of so desirable a marriage, suffering, in a less degree, from the covert reproaches of her sisters, who felt it as a grievance upon them, Mary had a sad time of it. As to Charles Baumgarten he had gone on circuit and seemed to be done with for ever. Even Richard never heard from him or of him.

But all this only shows how we estimate things by comparison. Had it not been for the visions opened up by Mary's becoming the wife of Sir Everard, it might not have occurred to Dr. Dynevor to turn up his nose at Charles, nephew of the Earl of Avon, heir to the half of Lady Grace's fortune, sure to meet with support and to get on at the Bar. Sensible and steady, Charles Baumgarten would have been welcomed for any one of the portionless daughters of the Canon.

He and Mary might have had to struggle a little at first, but it would all come right in the end, and the Sub-dean would have married them himself with pleasure. But under the actual circumstances—Mary's having refused a splendid match that she might throw herself away upon him—of course Charles Baumgarten was nothing less than a bête noire in the eyes of the Dynevors, very black indeed to the Sub-dean.

"It is of no use, madam, my coming here day after day to see the patient," somewhat testily explained Dr. Lamb, the family physician, one day to Miss Dynevor. "The disorder is on the mind: some trouble, I believe, is weighing upon her. If it cannot be set at rest, I can do no good."

"And what then?" asked Miss Dynevor: "If nothing can be done for her mind, what then?"

"Why, you take away the chance of her getting better, and if she does not get better, she must get worse; and the result may be—if I may speak plainly—death. It is not in my province to enquire into family secrets," continued the physician; "but it does seem strange that a girl of her age should have any wasting care which cannot be removed."

Miss Dynevor, now very uneasy, sat down to write an epistle—as she invariably called her letters—to the Sub-dean, at Oldchurch. She then had a serious talk with Mary; laid aside her crossness for the occasion, and pointed out to her, kindly and rationally, that it was her duty to rouse herself and forget Charles Baumgarten. With the effort to do this, forgetfulness might come, and with forgetfulness health would return. Mary burst into tears, and sobbed so long and vehemently that Miss Dynevor was startled, but her reply was, that she *would* try to forget him, provided she might be allowed one interview with him, to explain to him that they must finally part.

The epistle had the effect of bringing Dr. Dynevor to town. Though harsh and stern with his children, he was fond of them at heart—just as his sister was—and he did not like to hear that Mary might be in danger of dying. He travelled up by night, reaching Eaton Place in the morning. Breakfast over, he shut himself in with his sister.

"And now, Ann, what do you mean by writing to me as you did?" began he, in his sternest manner. "Calling Mary names—and all the rest of it!"

"Names!" cried Miss Dynevor.

"You said she was dying!"

"I said to you, Richard, what Dr. Lamb said to me. And I gave you my own opinion—that she had better be allowed to marry Charles Baumgarten."

"I daresay," exclaimed the haughty Canon.

"There's not a shade of chance now for Sir Everard Wilmot," went on Miss Dynevor. "It's of no use thinking of *him*. Of course girls are

only born to give a heap of trouble to their family, and for nothing else—as I have remarked to yours, every one of them, over and over again—and they ought not to be given way to under ordinary circumstances. But when it comes to this point, that the girl may be dying, to give way may be nothing less than a duty."

"What next?" asked the Sub-dean.

Miss Dynevor took up a screen to shield her face, which always grew unpleasantly pink in argument, and repeated the substance of her conversation with Mary. That she had promised to try to get well, provided she might once more see Charles Baumgarten.

"And did you sanction it?" demanded the Sub-dean, turning round fiercely, both hands thrust into his clerical pockets.

"Why, no. I expect you'd have come down upon me pretty sharply if I had, Richard. I couldn't, either, for Charles is on Circuit."

"Much good he'll do on that! growled the Sub-dean.

"Time he was back though now, I suppose," added Miss Dynevor, thoughtfully. "It is some weeks since he started on it. Mary wants to be allowed to see him, that they may bid one another adieu for ever.

"Let her see him then, and have done with it," spoke the Canon sharply.

Miss Dynevor was surprised at the concession, but hastened to repeat it to Mary. It made her pale and agitated.

"I shall write a short epistle to his chambers in Pump Court and let it await him there," said Miss Dynevor. "No doubt he will call here as soon as he reads it."

"Mind, aunt, I must see him alone," said Mary, a strangely heightened colour lighting her wan cheeks.

"You need not fear that any of us will covet to be present: we are not so fond of him," retorted Miss Dynevor.

She sent the "epistle" to Pump Court. It lay there for some little time. Charles's was the Home Circuit; and when its business was over, he turned to Great Whitton to spend a day or two with his mother and sister, who were staying at Avon House. But he lost no time in obeying the summons, when he was back in London.

Mary received him alone, as she had wished. She sat back upon the large, old-fashioned sofa in the drawing-room, her head supported by a pillow. Charles was shocked to observe the change in her, and thought she must be dying.

"No," she said to him, after they had spoken for some time, "I am not dying. They think, at least they say, that when once my mind is at rest, when we shall have parted for good, suspense exchanged for certain misery, that I shall begin to get well again. It may be so."

"Mary, they have no right to part us."

"It must be so: it is to be. I cannot act in defiance of my father."

"And you can part from me without an effort!"

"Without an effort?" she repeated. "Look at me, Charles: and then see what it has cost me."

He repented of his hasty words, sat down by her side, and drew her to him. Her head lay passively upon his shoulder; and they had just settled themselves into this most interesting position, when the door opened with a crash, and in marched the Sub-dean, Mary's head started back to its pillow; Charles stood up, folded his arms, and looked fearlessly at the intruder.

"So you are here again, sir?"

"By appointment, Dr. Dynevor. And I am grieved to see what I do see. She is surely dying."

"You think so, do you?" cried the Canon. "Perhaps you imagine you could save her life?"

"At any rate I would try to save it, if I were allowed. What is your objection to me, sir?" he hastily added, his tone one of sharp demand. "My connexions are unexceptionable; and many a briefless barrister has risen in time to the woolsack."

"I am glad you have the modesty to acknowledge that you are briefless."

"I did not acknowledge it, and I am not briefless," returned Charles. "I have begun to get on."

Dr. Dynevor looked at his daughter. "Would you patronise this sort of 'getting on?'" asked he.

There was a strange meaning in his tone, which struck on Mary's ear. She rose in agitation, her hands clasped. "Papa, I would risk it. Oh, papa, if you would only let me, I would risk it and trust it."

"If you choose to risk it and trust it, you may do so," responded the Sub-dean, coolly; "and that is what I have come in to say. But, recollect, I wash my hands of the consequences. When you shall have gathered all kinds of embarrassments about you," he added, turning to Charles, "don't expect that you are to come to me to help you out of them. If you two wish to make simpletons of yourselves and marry, go and do it. But understand that you will do it with your eyes open, Mr. Charles Baumgarten."

The Sub-dean strutted out of the room, and Charles caught the girl to him, for he thought she was fainting.

"How good he is to us!" gasped the young man in the revulsion of feeling which the decision brought him.

(To be continued.)

MONSIEUR SILVAIN'S SECRET.

By Mary E. Penn.

MONSIEUR SILVAIN had not at all the look of a man with a secret; being a brisk, dapper, cheerful little gentleman of middle age, with a round, clean-shaven face, short-sighted blue eyes, and a mouth which wore a perpetual smile.

He was a bachelor, and affected a juvenile style of dress; in manners, he was the pink of politeness and urbanity, and in conversation, was perfectly frank and unreserved on every subject save one.

For about three years he had occupied rooms in the Rue Vavin, on the second floor of a house near the Luxembourg Gardens. Every day, Sundays and fêtes not excepted, he left home at nine and returned at six, but how he was occupied during his absence was a mystery. When questioned as to the nature of his business or profession, Monsieur Silvain either politely evaded the enquiry, or else petrified the interrogator with a stony stare which effectually checked further indiscretion.

If, as had more than once happened, he was followed on his way to "business," he adroitly contrived to give his pursuers the slip after exhausting them with a long and exciting chase.

In spite of the mystery attaching to him, the little gentleman was far from unpopular. He was reputed to be rich, and was known to be generous, while his politeness and geniality commended him to everyone.

Even Old Musard, his concierge, though aggrieved by the "second-floor's" unaccountable reserve, had been heard to admit that "there couldn't be much harm in a man who had a good word for everyone, carried bonbons in his pocket for the children, and was a providence to all the poor in the neighbourhood."

Such was Monsieur Silvain, and such had been the tenour of his life for three years or thereabouts, when, one bleak November evening, having returned to his apartments at the usual hour, and made some changes in his dress, he prepared to sally forth again to the restaurant where he was in the habit of dining.

Jauntily descending the stairs he was crossing the landing below his own, when he was arrested by an unusual sound proceeding from the rooms which opened on to it.

He was on terms of neighbourly intimacy with their occupant, the elderly widow of a retired colonel, but it was certainly neither Madame Evrard, nor Marthe, her stout bonne, who was singing with such thrilling sweetness and pathos the old melody of "Ma Normandie."

"Charming, charming!" commented Monsieur Silvain, half-aloud, refreshing himself from his snuff-box as he listened. "A pure soprano, admirably trained. I wonder who Madame's visitor can be, and whether her face matches her voice? By-the-bye I owe my neighbour a visit. Why not pay it now?"

Without further hesitation he rang the bell.

Instead of the buxom Marthe in her white cap and apron, it was a young lady who answered his summons. A sweet-faced, fair-haired girl of nineteen, in a well-worn black dress with a knot of winter violets at her breast.

The effect of this pleasant apparition on Monsieur Silvain was remarkable, not to say mysterious. He peered at her doubtfully for a moment through his eye-glass, then started, and drew back, giving her a glance of wondering and delighted recognition. Perceiving, however, that there was no answering consciousness on her face, but surprise and some amusement at his bewildered expression, he quickly recovered himself, and saluted her with ceremonious politeness.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle, can I have the pleasure of seeing Madame Evrard?"

She inclined her head in assent, and preceded him across the antechamber into a cosy little panelled sitting-room, lighted only by the flickering gleam of a wood fire, which revealed the figure of its occupant sitting severely upright in a high-backed chair by the hearth, knitting energetically.

The officer's widow was a bright-eyed, well-preserved woman of fifty, with a quick manner and a shrewd, but not unkindly face.

"Ah, Monsieur Silvain, is it you? I thought you had forgotten me," she said, arresting her knitting-pins for a moment to shake hands with him. "Take a seat, and let me introduce you to this young friend of mine; the orphan daughter of an old comrade of my husband. Renée, my neighbour, Monsieur Silvain."

Bringing his heels together, the visitor bowed with the grace of a marquis of the old régime, murmuring with a smile that he was "enchanted."

"I hope you happen to be fond of music," the widow proceeded briskly, "for Renée is come to live with me, and it will be unfortunate if you are annoyed by her practising."

"Annoyed, Madame? I shall be charmed—enraptured!" he protested. "Music is my passion, and to hear such an artiste as Mademoiselle is a treat indeed. Allow me to congratulate you, and your charming friend on this most happy arrangement."

"Yes, I think it will be an advantage to both of us," she acquiesced.

"But much greater on my side than on yours, Madam Evrard," the girl rejoined, bending to kiss the elder lady's cheek. "If you knew how delightful it is after living in solitary lodgings so long to have a home to return to and a friend to welcome me when my day's work is done!"

"You might have had them months ago if you had let me know you were in Paris, instead of leaving me to find it out by chance."

"I feared ——"

"Yes, I know; you are a proud girl," her friend interrupted, tapping her cheek with a knitting-needle. Then turning to the visitor, who, with his eye-glass fixed on his nose, was looking profoundly interested and sympathetic, she continued: "Quiet as she looks, this is a very adventurous and independent young lady, Monsieur Silvain. When her father died three years ago, leaving her to face the world alone, she adopted music as her profession, and not being appreciated in her native place, Rouen, came up to Paris last year with the hope ——"

"Of covering myself with laurels," Renée put in. "But alas! here I am, still unknown to fame, giving lessons at four francs an hour. A melancholy example of frustrated ambition."

"No matter! a woman was never the happier for being famous," Madame Evrard returned, consolingly; "we must find you a husband, my child; you will cease to care for laurels when you have worn orange-blossoms. What say you, Monsieur Silvain?"

"Undoubtedly, Madame, it is better to be happy than famous," he answered, absently, without removing his eyes from the girl's face.

She looked at him demurely as she leaned with folded arms on the back of Madame Evrard's chair.

"If you consider marriage equivalent to happiness, Monsieur Silvain, pardon me for asking how it is you are still a bachelor?"

He shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating smile.

"Mademoiselle, I must plead that it is not my fault, but my misfortune. Constantly occupied in my—ahem!—official duties, I have positively had no leisure hitherto to think of matrimony, but I hope ——"

"Your official duties?" the widow interrupted quickly. "Then you have a post under government, Monsieur Silvain?"

He dropped his glove, and stooped to pick it up.

"I—hm—have occupied my present position for a number of years, Madame."

"Ah—a snug berth, I daresay?"

"Very snug," he replied, smoothing his hat and examining with a sudden appearance of interest the maker's name inside. Then, as if anxious to change the conversation, he turned to Renée.

"Do not let my presence prevent you from finishing that charming song, Mademoiselle."

"Not that old-fashioned thing, child," Madame Evrard interposed. "Fetch the lamp, and let us have something worth hearing."

The visitor's eyes followed her from the room with a look which his companion was not slow to notice.

"I see that you admire my young friend," she remarked.

"She is adorable! such a union of grace, beauty and sweetness, I have never seen."

"Yes, she is pretty," the widow admitted, impartially.

"Pretty? pardon—the term is too commonplace. Mademoiselle Renée has the face of an angel—and the heart of one."

The last words were added in an undertone, as if spoken to himself. Her busy needles stopped abruptly, as she looked at him with upraised eyebrows.

"You must be a very acute observer to discover her angelic qualities after being only five minutes in her company. But perhaps you have heard something of her history—though I don't know who can have told you." He shook his head with a smile.

"I do not even know her name, Madame, for you forgot to mention it just now. I judged from the sweetness of her expression."

"Oh, I see. Like most men, you give a pretty woman credit for all the virtues," she remarked drily. "However, in this case you happen to be right, for Renée Duvilliers is —— "

He pushed back his chair with a stifled exclamation of surprise.

"Duvilliers," he repeated. "Is she the daughter of Raymond Duvilliers of Rouen?"

"Yes. You knew him then?"

"I have heard of him, Madame."

"You have heard nothing to his credit I fear," she remarked, shaking her head significantly, "for between ourselves, the Captain was a bad man. He began life with every advantage, but after squandering his fortune in all sorts of follies, he was reduced to living by his wits. He retrieved his fortune by a rich marriage, and though, of course, he soon ran through half his wife's money—she was an Englishwoman, older than himself—Renée would have been left fairly well off, if it had not been for her own Quixotic self-sacrifice. After her father's death, she found among his papers a memorandum concerning a certain Monsieur Mathieu, an ex-dancing master, of Paris, whom the Captain had, well, I'm afraid I must say swindled, out of all his savings, under pretext of some brilliant investment which only existed in his own fertile imagination."

"Monsieur Mathieu must have been a weak and credulous person," her listener remarked coolly, taking snuff.

"Possibly. But what was Raymond Duvilliers? Even when he had it in his power to refund the money, he cruelly neglected to do so, and left the poor man's piteous appeals unanswered; for Renée found his letters, dated nearly twenty years ago, with the seals unbroken."

"He had his remedy at law."

"No, for Duvilliers had managed to keep on the safe side of the code. Well," she continued, "you may think how shocked his daughter was by the discovery. She never rested till, by means of advertisements in Parisian papers, she had discovered her father's

victim and made restitution. Her property being, unfortunately, under her own control, she at once refunded the greater part of the money, and undertook to pay the rest in annual instalments out of the pittance she had left herself, which she proposed to increase by teaching."

Monsieur Silvain coughed, and changed his position abruptly. "And this person—Mathieu—how could he accept the reparation, knowing that she had reduced herself to poverty in order to ——"

"He did not know it. The money was refunded, through her lawyer, in her father's name. She has never seen him, and knows nothing concerning him, except what his letters told her. He furnished proofs of his identity, but gave no information as to his present position. Maître Delaunay, of Rouen, was her agent in the matter—sorely against his will, as it deprived his son of a fortune."

"How so?"

"Renée was engaged to be married to Maurice Delaunay, whom she had known from childhood, but when she insisted on beggaring herself, the notary and his wife peremptorily broke off the match, and as the young man is dependent on his parents, he was forced to give way. I'm afraid," she added, with a sigh, "that it will not be an easy matter to find the poor child another parti."

Her companion shut his snuff-box with an indignant snap. "You must have a poor opinion of my sex, Madame, if you think that beauty and goodness such as hers ——"

"Eh, my good sir, you are sadly behind the times!" his hostess interrupted with a shrug. "What do beauty and goodness avail unless they are set off by a golden frame? It is not for her 'beaux yeux' that a girl is wooed now-a-days, but for 'les beaux yeux de sa cassette.' But hush," she broke in, "Renée is coming back."

The next moment the girl appeared with the lamp in her hand.

Feeling instinctively that they had been speaking of her, she glanced from one to the other as she placed it on the table, then looked more closely at the visitor, bending her brows in a puzzled frown.

"It is strange," she said slowly, "your face seems familiar to me. I can't think of whom it is you remind me."

"Some friend at Rouen, perhaps?" Madame Evrard suggested.

"No; of someone here in Paris, whom I have seen recently ——"

Monsieur Silvain rose and came forward, standing so that the light fell full on his face and figure.

"Every man is said to have his double. I should be curious to know of whom I can remind you," he said, composedly.

She shook her head. "I can't recollect, and now that I look at you again, the resemblance vanishes. I daresay it was only fancy," she said, as she opened her music-book. Once installed at the piano, she was not allowed to leave it till her répertoire was exhausted,

Monsieur Silvain petitioning again and again "for just one more" song, till the evening had insensibly passed away.

At last, suddenly becoming conscious of the fact that he had not yet dined, their visitor, with a profusion of thanks and apologies, took his leave. When the little gentleman had bowed himself out, Madame Evrard turned to her companion and demanded abruptly: "Well, what do you think of my neighbour?"

Renée, who was still seated at the piano, running her fingers absently over the keys, wheeled round on the music-stool.

"I think he is 'charming, charming!'" she replied, with a droll imitation of his manner; "but he is a living anachronism. He ought to have been a functionary of the vieille cour, instead of a clerk under the Republic. But there is something quaint and pleasant in his old-fashioned gallantry, and he has a face one can trust."

"I am glad you like him," her friend replied, complacently. "I assure you that he returns the compliment with interest. In fact, Renée, you have made a conquest."

The girl lifted her pretty brows with a look of laughing incredulity. "Really? I had no idea I was so fascinating. But what a very susceptible old gentleman he must be!"

"Old?" her friend repeated with some resentment. "I don't know what you call old. He can't be much over fifty."

"Well, that isn't exactly the first bloom of youth, is it?"

"It is the prime of life for a man. And he doesn't look his age. With such good hair and teeth ——"

Renée broke into an irrepressible laugh. "Why, Monsieur Silvain has bewitched your sight! His luxuriant hair is the most innocent wig I ever saw; and as for his teeth ——"

"Well, it doesn't matter," Madame Evrard answered hastily; "a man's appearance is of very little consequence if he is eligible in every other respect—which our neighbour undoubtedly is. Rich, good-natured and good-mannered; occupying, it appears, a responsible post under Government—let me tell you, Renée, that such a match is not to be despised by a girl in your position."

"Perhaps not," she acquiesced, mildly; "but as I happen to be already engaged ——"

The widow let her knitting fall into her lap.

"Engaged?" she repeated; "to whom?"

"To Maurice Delaunay."

"Did you not tell me that the engagement had been broken off by his people three years ago?"

"Yes — but not by himself. He would have married me in defiance of them, but I told him that I would not be his wife till—till I had fulfilled my task and cleared my father's name of the stain of dishonour."

"And you think he will wait for you?" her friend questioned, with a cynically compassionate smile; "that shows how little you

know of men! You are living in a world of dreams, my poor child."

"If love and faith and honour are dreams, what is real in life?" she answered softly, as she closed the piano. "I am as sure of his fidelity as I am of my own, and I have confidence in the future. 'Work, wait and trust,' that is my motto."

Madame Evrard shook her head in emphatic disapproval, but was wise enough to say no more.

In spite of her cheerful confidence, however, there were moments when the girl's courage and spirits failed her; and her heart grew sick with hope deferred.

It was in one of these moods of dejection that she set forth next morning on her daily round, but she attributed her depression to the influence of the weather. It was a grey, melancholy day; a chill mist clung to the surface of the river and drifted along the busy quays.

As she crossed the Pont Neuf, Renée paused for a moment to drop a contribution into the leathern wallet of the old wooden-legged fiddler, familiarly known to Parisians by the soubriquet of "Père Joyeux." For more years than anyone cared to count, he had haunted the same sheltered corner near the end of the bridge, scraping away energetically on a battered fiddle, whose shrill merry notes made themselves heard above all the noise of traffic. Men might come and men might go, but Père Joyeux's fiddle "went on for ever," in cheerful defiance of time and change. He had grown to be regarded as a public pensioner, and though he never asked for alms, the "gros sous" came dropping fast into the open wallet which was slung from his shoulder. Coins of any sort were not very plentiful with Renée, but she seldom omitted to contribute her mite in her daily pilgrimage across the bridge, accompanying the donation with a friendly little nod and smile and sometimes a few words of greeting.

Having deposited her offering in silence to-day, she was passing on, when the old violinist called her back, breaking off in the middle of a bar.

"My little lady, you have given me a silver piece; did you know?"

"Yes, I have no coppers. Is it not a good one?" she added, for he had picked it out of the bag and was eyeing it curiously. He nodded, and stowed it carefully away in his waistcoat pocket.

"Quite good, and a new one, too! I shall keep it for luck," he replied, and, tucking his fiddle under his grizzled beard once more, he broke into the tune of "Monsieur et Madame Denis."

"Do you remember,
Do you remember,
The happy days when love was young?"

Renée found herself humming the refrain of the foolish old song as she went her way. Ah, yes, too well she remembered those happy bye-gone days when all the world was glorified by the light of

newborn love. How bright they seemed, but how distant, looking back at them from the shadowed present! It was little more than a year since she had parted from her lover, but that long dreary year seemed to have put a gulf between them, in spite of the tender letters which bridged it across. Her heart thrilled with the longing to see him again; to hear once more the dear familiar voice which to her was the sweetest music the world could give.

"Renée!"

She paused with a start, looking wonderingly, half-incredulously at the speaker, into whose arms she had almost run in her pre-occupation. It was Maurice himself who stood before her, looking down at her with "liquid eyes of love."

"Renée, don't you know me?" he questioned smiling, as he put out his hand.

She drew a deep breath, and her face brightened all over with joyful surprise.

"Oh, Maurice, is it really you?" was all she could find to say.

"I believe so," he answered soberly, "though your incredulous look just now almost made me doubt my own identity. Was I so far from your thoughts at that moment, dear?"

"So near to them, on the contrary, that your sudden appearance seemed almost magical," she returned, with a happy laugh. "I had no idea you were in Paris."

"Nor has anyone else," he replied, as he drew her hand through his arm, and walked on with her. "At the present moment I am supposed to be at Pontoise, where my father sent me on a business mission, but, finding myself so near to you, how could I resist the temptation of coming? I was positively hungering for a sight of you. Oh, my darling," he added, pressing her hand to his side, "what happiness it is to be together again, if only for a few stolen moments. If you knew how my heart has ached all these weary months!"

"I know—by my own," she whispered.

"And how has the world been using you, sweetheart, since we parted a year ago?" he went on, looking down at her tenderly.

"Fairly well, on the whole," she responded with a smile, "though to tell the truth, I find the road to success steeper than I expected."

"Too steep for your little feet to tread alone. The task you have undertaken is too heavy for you, Renée. Why will you not give me the right to help you?"

She shook her head.

"I have put my hand to the plough and I must not look back," she rejoined with a serious smile. "After all, work is no hardship when one is young—and when one has a motive as strong as mine."

"Is it no hardship that you should be wearing out your youth in toil and poverty to atone for your father's fault, while I, who would so gladly take the task upon myself, am kept apart from you by my parents' mercenary ——"

"Hush," she interrupted; "let us not blame either the living or the dead. We shall not be kept apart for ever. If we are true to ourselves and each other, all will come right in time."

After that there was silence for a few moments, then they fell into conversation again; talking of the past and the future, calling up tender memories, and forming happy projects, oblivious of time and the world round them.

At length the sound of a church clock striking the hour made Renée start guiltily.

Twelve o'clock! You have beguiled me into forgetting all my pupils," she exclaimed. "Dear, we must say good-bye now. No, do not come to Madame Evrard's; let our parting words be spoken alone. And you must return home this evening; promise me that you will."

"Very well," he acquiesced reluctantly: "but we shall soon meet again, for with my father's consent or without it, I intend to spend New Year's Day with you. Till then, good-bye, sweet love. I leave my heart in your keeping."

"As mine is in yours," she whispered.

A long, lingering look; a warm close pressure of the hands, and they parted, drifting away from each other into diverging currents of the city's living tide.

II.

Six weeks had passed away. It was the last day of the old year. For the first time on record Monsieur Silvain so far departed from his usual habits as not to leave home till afternoon. Marthe, Madame Evrard's comely hand-maiden, rushed into the salon, where her mistress was sitting alone, to announce this portentous event.

"And he was dressed like a prince, Madame! a brand new overcoat with a fur collar and a hat you could see yourself in. I was to give his compliments and say that he would have the honour of waiting upon you at four o'clock, when he hoped to find Mademoiselle Renée also at home."

"Humph! I think I know what that means," was the widow's mental comment, as she took off her glasses and laid down the paper she was reading; "he is coming to propose in due form. It has been evident for some time to everyone but Renée herself that he meant to do so, though she persists in treating him as if he were her grandfather, not perceiving that her friendly familiarity seems like encouragement to his hopes. I haven't patience with the girl! And now, to complicate matters, that tiresome young man, who I hoped was forgetting her, is coming this very evening! What am I to say to Monsieur Silvain? Well," she concluded with a shrug, "I have done my best for him, and now I wash my hands of the matter."

Meantime, her fellow-lodger, walking with his most juvenile step and throwing out his chest to show the new overcoat to advantage,

went blithely on his way humming his favourite air of "Malbrouck." Across the river, along the Boulevard to the Palais Royal, where he entered a florist's shop and purchased, at a fancy price, a superb bouquet of hot-house roses.

"Roses in December—they are typical," he thought, smiling to himself, as he watched the shopwoman enveloping this treasure in paper. "Typical of the love which blooms in life's winter as well as its spring. Very good. I must remember to say that to my sweet Renée."

After a stroll through the brilliantly-lighted arcades of the Palais, he turned towards home, which he reached shortly before four o'clock.

"The ladies are in the salon," Marthe told him, giving him an odd look which he did not notice; "there is a visitor with them, a friend of Mademoiselle, who has just arrived."

"Very good," he answered absently, scarcely hearing her in his preoccupation.

The old bachelor's cheeks were flushed, and his heart beat fast, as he approached the door of the sitting-room. It was partly open, and as he paused, furtively adjusting his collar and cravat, he heard a sound of laughter within; Renée's musical voice mingling with the deeper tones of a man. Surprised, he cautiously opened the door a little wider and looked in.

On the hearth, opposite to him, stood Renée, flushed and radiant, looking up into the handsome bronzed face of a tall, dark-eyed young fellow of three or four and twenty, who had imprisoned both her hands in his own, while his other arm, from which she was laughingly endeavouring to disengage herself, encircled her waist.

"Let me go, sir; don't you see that Madame Evrard looks quite scandalised?" she exclaimed, glancing at Madame Evrard, whose face expressed the most unqualified disapproval.

"It is at you then, not at me!" he declared. "Madame is naturally astonished that you should object to be respectfully saluted by your fiancé—so!" and suiting the action to the word, he bent and kissed her.

The watcher started as if he had been struck, and hastily drawing back, before anyone had perceived his presence, turned from the door. Marthe, hearing his returning footsteps, came out from her little kitchen and looked at him in surprise.

"Make my compliments to the ladies, and say that as they have a visitor I will not intrude this evening," he said, and walked away.

Safely locked into his own rooms, he stood for a moment looking vaguely round, like one waking from a dream, then, becoming conscious of the roses in his hand, he flung them from him with a passionate ejaculation, and sitting down at the table, let his head fall on his folded arms, and cried like a child.

His emotion had subsided, but he was still sitting in the same dejected attitude, when there was a gentle summons at the outer door. He allowed it to be twice repeated before he roused himself to answer it. At length, with an impatient shrug, he unlocked the door, and started when he found that the visitor was Renée.

"I am come to scold you, Monsieur Silvain," she began, with her sweet smile. "Marthe tells us that you refused to come in because we had a visitor. Surely you did not think you would be intruding? Monsieur Delaunay wishes to be introduced to you. I ought to tell you," she added shyly, "that we—that we are engaged, though our engagement has not the sanction of his family, and ——"

She checked herself, noticing for the first time his unusual pallor and gravity. "You are not ill, Monsieur Silvain?"

He shook his head, smiling constrainedly. "No, not ill, only a little low-spirited, and therefore not likely to be good company this evening, so I will beg you to excuse me."

"I am very sorry," she said gently, putting out her hand.

He took it in both his own, looking at her with an expression of tender earnestness, which she had never seen on his face before.

"We have all our troubles—you have yours also my child, have you not? but you are young, and in youth, 'though sorrow may endure for a night, joy cometh with the morning.'"

"My 'morning' seems still far off," she answered, with a smile and a sigh.

"Have patience, it will come—sooner perhaps than you expect," was his reply. "Thanks for your sympathy, my sweet friend. Good-night."

"Until to-morrow," she cried.

He watched her out of sight, then stood for a moment on the landing, looking down, deep in thought. When he raised his face, it had recovered its usual serenity, and wore a look of resolution which gave it a new dignity.

"Yes," he muttered, "I will do it; she shall be happy. And as for me—well, I shall be no worse off than I was formerly. Allons!"

And rousing himself from his abstraction, he turned into his solitary rooms once more and closed the door.

The New Year began auspiciously with brilliant sunshine and a cloudless sky. The domes and spires of Paris, lightly powdered with new fallen snow, looked fairy-like and aerial, and when a light breeze stirred the river, every ripple flashed back the sunbeams.

On this great festival of the year, all Paris seemed to be out of doors. The boulevards, with their long lines of stalls, were thronged with promenaders, the shops and cafés crowded with customers, while merry family parties hurried along on foot or in carriages, to pay the round of calls which French etiquette prescribes on the "Jour de l'An."

Renée and her fiancé had spent the whole sunny afternoon

drifting with the stream along the Boulevards. Infected by the universal gaiety, they had put aside for a time all doubts of the future, giving themselves up to the happiness of the present. To-morrow they would be parted again—who could say for how long? But to-day was theirs, and they would enjoy its sweetness to the utmost.

Daylight was waning when at last they turned their faces homewards. Half way across the Pont-Neuf, Renée paused, with a regretful exclamation:

"I quite forgot Père Joyeux!"

"Who is he?" her companion demanded.

"An old pensioner of mine; a crippled fiddler who always plays on the bridge. There he is, on the other side. Let us cross over."

"Never mind now, Renée; it is getting dark, and beginning to snow again. Give him something to-morrow."

"But this is New Year's Day, and it seems unkind to neglect him when I am so happy. Look, he has seen me—he is looking so wistfully! Stay here, I shall not be a moment."

"Wait—wait till this railway-van has gone past!" he exclaimed; but she had already darted from his side.

The road was slippery with fresh-fallen snow, and when halfway across, the girl's foot slipped. She made a vain effort to recover herself, and fell just in the track of the heavy vehicle, which came thundering along, drawn by two powerful horses. The driver, on his high perch, did not perceive what had happened till the bystanders uttered a warning shout, which was echoed by a cry of alarm from Maurice, as he hurried to her assistance.

Quick as he was, however, someone else had anticipated him.

Père Joyeux, who had been watching her movements, flung his violin aside, and before Maurice could reach the spot, he had snatched her literally from under the horses' hoofs. The startled animals shied and reared, backing the van against the parapet, and there was a moment of wild confusion and alarm before the driver succeeded in quieting them.

Renée, bruised and giddy, leaned half-fainting on the arm of her lover, whose face was scarcely less white than hers.

"What an escape!" he gasped. "Are you hurt, Renée?"

"No, no; but where is Père Joyeux who has saved my life?" she asked, anxiously looking round. "I heard a cry—oh, what has happened?" she broke off, noticing that an excited crowd had gathered on the pavement. The compassionate faces of the group answered her before she made her way through them and saw the figure of her old friend stretched insensible upon the asphalte.

There was no sign of external injury, but his face looked white and pinched, and there was a bluish shadow under his closed eyes.

With an inarticulate exclamation of pity, Renée knelt at his side and raised his head on to her knee.

'He couldn't get out of the way quickly enough, and the horses knocked him down," someone explained, and other voices in the crowd echoed the words with a murmur of regret and compassion.

The next moment a policeman approached, and after a few brief enquiries, which Maurice answered, peremptorily dispersed the lookers-on, and hailed a passing carriage, giving the order, "To the Hôtel-Dieu."

The injured man having been carefully lifted in, Renée and Maurice followed, and the carriage drove rapidly along the Quai de l'Horloge to the ancient hospital which looks down upon the Seine.

Père Joyeux, still unconscious, was at once carried to the accident ward, while Maurice and Renée waited to learn the surgeon's opinion of his injuries. After what seemed an interminable interval, one of the hospital Sisters appeared and beckoned to Renée.

"He has regained consciousness and asks for you," she said. "Pardon, monsieur," she added, as Maurice was about to follow, "he wishes to speak to Mademoiselle alone."

The girl's heart beat fast with some vague expectation which she could not define, as she followed her guide along an echoing stone corridor to the accident ward, a long narrow apartment lighted by half-blocked windows high in the wall, which admitted the last pale gleam of daylight. A tall stove stood in the middle of the ward, and on each side was a row of pallet-beds, most of which were occupied. The latest arrival had been placed in one near the door, sheltered by a screen. The surgeon, who was bending over him, straightened himself as they approached, and looked at Renée.

"Is he seriously hurt?" she asked, in an anxious whisper.

"He is dying," was the grave reply. "He has sustained internal injuries which leave no hope of recovery."

He drew back as he spoke, to allow her to approach the bed, but after one glance at its occupant she recoiled with a stifled cry of astonishment. The face on the pillow, though familiar to her, was not that of "Père Joyeux."

"You are surprised at the change in his appearance?" the surgeon remarked in an undertone; "he had been wearing a false beard, and without it he looks quite a different man. It is possible that he ——"

He left the sentence unfinished, as his patient moved uneasily, attempting to raise himself from the pillows.

"Is she there?" the latter asked faintly.

When Renée advanced, a sudden light irradiated his face; he put out his hand to her with a smile. "A happy New Year, my little lady!"

The girl mechanically gave him her hand, looking at him as one in a dream. "Monsieur Silvain," she breathed, in a low tone of questioning wonder.

He glanced significantly at the doctor, who, understanding the look, gave him a kindly nod and vanished behind the screen.

"Yes; 'Monsieur Silvain' to you," her old friend said when they were alone; "but your father knew me as Silvain Mathieu."

She started and coloured, then turned pale.

"What! it was you whom my father wronged?" she faltered.

"Dear child, you have repaired the wrong, and left me your debtor," he gently replied. "If I had known at the time what it cost you, I would never have accepted your generous reparation. Sit down; I have a story to tell you, Renée—not a long one, fortunately," he added, with a serious smile, "or I might not have time to finish it. You know what was formerly my profession? I was a dancing-master; the most fashionable in Paris during the Second Empire, but having met with an accident, which crippled me for life, I was compelled to retire in the height of my success. However, I had saved enough to live upon, and should have passed the rest of my days in comfort, if—if I had not been so foolish as to risk my small capital in the hope of increasing it. I lost it, as you know, and, after some years of struggle and privation, which I do not care to recall, all other resources having failed me, I began life afresh, on a lower level, as—a street musician, who has since been known to fame by the name of Père Joyeux. Don't look distressed; I assure you that the life suited me; I earned amply sufficient for my wants, and had grown perfectly reconciled to my lot, when one day, three years ago, I chanced to see your advertisement, and found myself once more independent."

"And then?" she asked, as he paused.

He glanced at her with humorous gravity. "Then, you naturally suppose, that I retired into private life. So I did; but, after six months of ease, I found that I was dying of ennui. I felt as if I had lost my identity. Who was Silvain Mathieu? A lonely old man whom nobody knew and nobody needed, whereas Père Joyeux had hundreds of friends whom he could serve in his humble way. Yes, have I not seen hard faces soften and sad ones brighten as I played? Have not my old tunes touched a chord of hope or memory in many a heart?"

"They have in mine, more than once," she put in softly.

"And then the Bohemian freedom of the life, its constant interest and variety, gave it a fascination which, in spite of myself, drew me back to it. So I returned to my old post. But for the last three years I have given in charity what I received from charity, and out of 'business hours' I became—Monsieur Silvain; the transformation being effected at quiet lodgings near the river, the landlord of which was in my confidence. Without my beard and wooden leg (which was replaced by an artificial one), I was unrecognisable; even you, who knew me in both characters, never guessed that Madame Evrard's friend was the old cripple to whom for a year past you have been a ministering angel. How eagerly I used to watch for your coming! You were the sunshine of my life, long before I knew who you were and what I owed to you."

Too much moved to speak, Renée laid her hand on his.

"The dear little charitable hand—how often I have longed to kiss it!" he murmured. "I may do so now, may I not?" and with the ghost of his old gallant manner he raised it to his lips. "I told you I should keep your silver piece for good luck," he continued, more faintly; "see—here it is."

He showed it to her strung round his neck.

"My poor friend—it has brought you misfortune instead!" she murmured tremulously. "But for me, you would not be ——"

"Hush," he interrupted gently; "what better fortune can I have than to save your life and secure your happiness? Renée, you will find a parcel in my desk, directed to yourself. I restore your gift, dear—as I meant to have done—if I had lived. There is no obstacle now between you—and—your lover. God bless you both. How dark it grows—and cold! Do not be sorry for me, dear—I am quite content," he concluded, with a tranquil smile.

A sudden shiver ran through him, and there was a change in his face. Then he drew a deep quiet breath.

"Quite content," he repeated; and with the smile on his lips he died.

A month later, when the first faint flowers of early spring were blooming on the old musician's grave, Renée and Maurice were married.

On the afternoon of their wedding-day, before starting on their journey into Normandy, they crossed the Pont Neuf once more, to pay a last visit to "Père Joyeux's" old haunt, and paused for a moment in the recess where he had been used to stand. The stream of life flowed past them, "ever changing never ceasing," like the river beneath, which the mellow sunset light had transformed into a flood of molten gold.

"I am glad no one has taken his place," Renée said softly, after a moment; "it would seem almost like desecration. I fancy I can still hear the sound of his violin! It was like a friendly voice to me in those dark days which are past."

Maurice looked down at her tenderly.

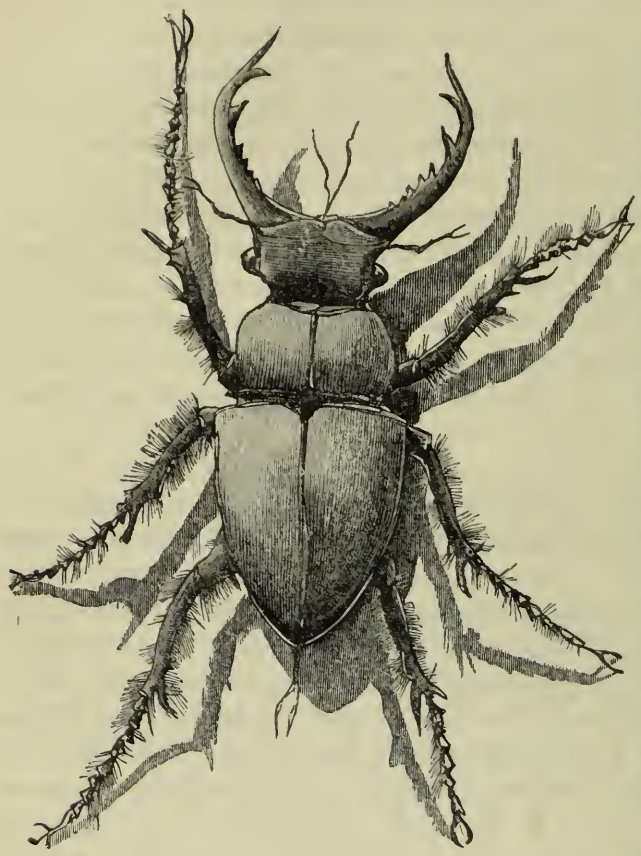
"They were dark days indeed, my sweet wife, but now that the sunshine is come, it seems all the brighter for the shadows we have passed through."

Renée glanced upwards at the luminous primrose sky, unflecked by a cloud from zenith to horizon.

"Yes," she answered, with a happy smile; "'Sorrow endured for a night, but joy has come with the morning!'"

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Under Northern Skies," etc., etc.



Palma, Nov., 1886.

My Dear E.—We had heard of the Caves of Arta as being some of the most wonderful in the world, and determined that this should be our second excursion. He who hesitates is lost; delays are dangerous; and a thousand proverbs declare the evils of indecision. So our minds were quickly made up. On Monday evening we returned from Miramar, a memorable visit. Tuesday was devoted to rest and the quiet ways of Palma. Wednesday, we started for Manacor.

On this occasion, we were to travel by train, not by the lordly barouche. Of course it made all the difference. In the first place, the train was much more commonplace. People would not bow down to the engine as it puffed along, as they had saluted the carriage. Again, we could not stop the train as we had stopped the barouche to photograph or sketch every scene that took our fancy. Lastly, we should not be able to fraternize with people on the road, as we had occasionally done in going to Miramar. A woman at her spinning-wheel would have to be simply a woman at her spinning-wheel, and nothing more. No sketch, no record, no conversational signs, no opportunity for H. C. to make havoc of the hearts of these fair Mallorquinas.

For all this, we enjoyed the idea of a railway journey on the island. We should see more of the people, collectively if not individually, gain an extended knowledge of the country. If the

train was less distinguished than the barouche, it was more rapid, and would cover more ground.

So we departed in high spirits, though feeling rather cast adrift as we rolled over the Palma stones in the uneasy omnibus. We could not speak a word of the language, and in the interior, should not be likely to find anyone who spoke English or French, or anything but Mallorcan. But want of courage is not our weakness, and those who, by a fair amount of intelligence, cannot overcome difficulties, and, as it were, make both ends of a journey meet, should stay at home.

We had had some thought of taking Francisco with us as interpreter and general factotum : our water-bearer, it might be said, if one were writing the language of the Zodiac.

But he could not be spared from the hotel, being the only man on the premises able to make himself conversationally useful. If a boat came in during our absence, with a cargo of foreigners, Francisco's absence would mean the commencement of the Reign of Confusion. This sometimes leads to Terror, Revolution and Bloodshed, Chaos and Annihilation. In fact, as many evils and horrors as even Ireland could be guilty of, or Obstructionists desire.

Francisco very much wanted to accompany us, and grew melancholy when he found it was not to be.

We consoled him by taking his photograph ; and he came out beautifully, with a sunbeam across his forehead and an aureole round his head. We persuaded him that this was a miracle, and that he was evidently an unappreciated St. Francis, who ought to be canonised. The Mallorquins took up the same idea, and had we been photographers in fact, and not in fun, our fortunes had now been made.

In fact, H. C. rather suggested something of the sort—strange thing for a poet to care for the loaves and fishes of this world. But Noblesse oblige, and pride no doubt has lost much ever since the days of our first parents.

So we left Francisco in a fair way of being worshipped by the Mallorquins, and departed for Manacor.

The omnibus rattled through the narrow streets of the town, crossed the old-fashioned market-place : where the stalls looked as picturesque as ever, with their flaming burdens of pomegranates, tomatoes, capsicums and rosy apples : and reached the station.

A large and not very interesting crowd had assembled. They could hardly be called all sorts and conditions of men, for most of them belonged to the humbler class. Some of these have already been slightly described to you, and I will not weaken any effect I may have made upon you by repetition. Many wore the distinguishing handkerchief of the swine herds, but were fortunately not accompanied by their charges. Others were dressed as many of the country people dress : wide Moorish trousers or breeches tied

round the waist with a red scarf, an open waistcoat and a broad-brimmed hat with tassels. A picturesque dress if new and fresh and worn gracefully. But a general untidiness and antiquity distinguished this motley crowd, and slovenliness in man or woman is a cardinal sin.

At the booking-office, a couple of soldiers or gensdarmes, with guns, kept order, after the custom of most Continental places. Here it seemed not unnecessary. The people swarmed for their tickets, and we, who could not swarm, were glad to accept the driver's offer to get ours. He looked after the luggage, was very attentive, and saw us comfortably settled in our compartment.

The train rolled off through the plains of Palma, and we soon entered upon new scenes. Everything new is or ought to be more or less instructive. The slow journey was yet further drawn-out by lengthened stoppages. This we rather enjoyed. We were in no hurry, and gained a little insight into the ways and looks of the people. Some of the small towns or villages, nestling amidst the hills or sleeping in the plains, were very picturesque. This was especially true of Inca, a small town which has a market every Thursday, where very much of the grain and produce of the country is bought and sold.

At last came Manacor: the largest town in the island next to Palma, but many degrees below Palma in civilisation.

The very hotel omnibus, to begin with, led to modest calculations as to what lay before us. It was the most ramshackle old vehicle ever seen. At first we thought we had made a mistake, but as nothing better was visible we kept our seats. Or, rather, we kept to the interior: to keep our seats was another and a harder matter.

The driver mounted to his perch in front and gave three or four vigorous thumps at the vehicle as a warning that he was off. Just the same sort of thumps that one has experienced over and over again in the French bathing-machines, when the horse goes off at a trot over the sands, and the next moment you find yourself lying upon the floor, your head bruised by coming into contact with the door, and an uncomfortable feeling of sea-sickness taking possession of you.

The warning at Manacor was quite as necessary. We were no sooner off than H. C., myself and the traps all found ourselves in a heap at the bottom. We shouted to the man to stop, but he, thinking us impatient, urged his fiery steed to greater exertions. Such action in a horse was never before seen—or felt. He must have come straight from the wild prairies of the "far west."

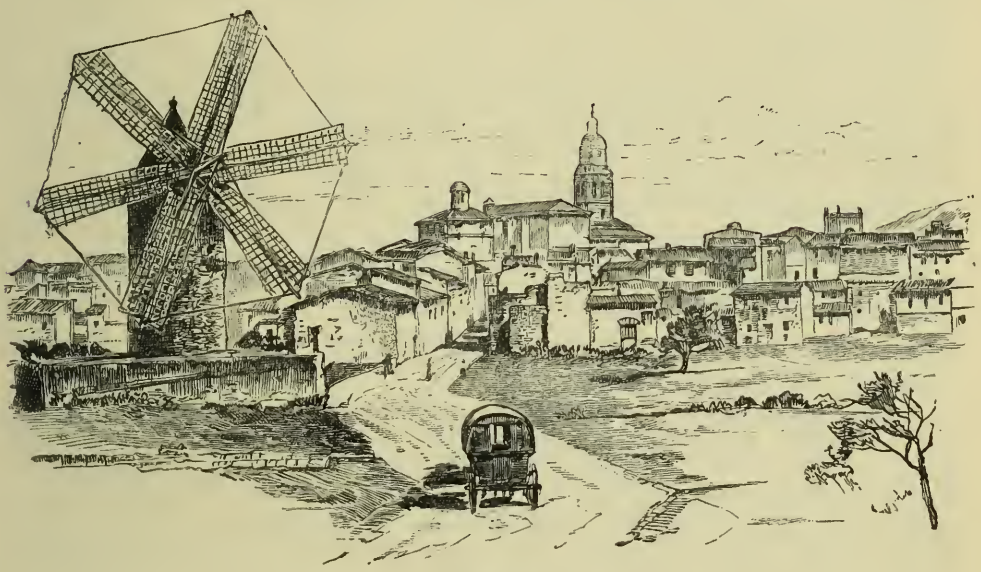
The machine swayed to and fro, threatened to overturn. We took our lives into our hands: our wills we had already made, you will remember, on the occasion of first tasting butter in Palma and mistaking it for poison.

We trembled for ourselves, our camera and our dry plates. As for

my dressing-bag, which, like a cat, has nine lives, and contained all our toilette hopes for the time being, it went circulating round the vehicle in search of an exit, eluded all our efforts to clutch it, until we gave up the chase in despair.

The omnibus went near the town, outside the town, everything but into the town, until we made up our minds that this time we really were going to be robbed and murdered. You will begin to think that we have murder upon the brain. I assure you it is not so. But though murder is said to be one of the fine arts, it is just one of those things for which there is no remedy. It is better to be on the safe side, if possible.

Once more we were mistaken. All at once the driver dashed through a gateway into a narrow street, grey, gloomy and deserted.



MANACOR.

This ended in a curious looking square, with tall houses, and, here and there, open, Moorish-looking balconies. Round the corner we soon came to our headquarters, the Fonda de Femenias.

It looked unpretending, but proved anything but uncomfortable. Upstairs, the rooms opened from a wide, covered balcony overlooking the street, which also gave to this house a sort of Eastern, open-air, mid-summery impression. It was picturesque with green shutters, creepers, aviaries, small round tables, on which stood more cages containing poor imprisoned birds: partridges, intended for killing and eating: for their own profit and the travellers' pleasure. Presently, when one was placed before us, dressed and ready for eating, we felt like cannibals. It was also the best and most open portion of the town, immediately opposite the old church. We were steeped in the odour of sanctity, surrounded by an ecclesiastical atmosphere. It had its drawbacks, as we presently discovered.

The landlady was anxious to make us comfortable and do her best, and succeeded. She showed us a goodly-sized room at the end of the balcony, with two beds, and this we preferred to two small closets containing only one bed each. Health depends upon fresh air and a certain number of cubic feet. Not one word of any language but her own can she speak, this good woman, nor anyone else about the hotel. But we never came to a deadlock. We had brought dictionaries and "Conversations," and found these equal to any interpreter and much less troublesome.

Whilst dinner was preparing, we strolled into the town. The church has very little to recommend it. I can hardly tell you what its architecture is like. A little of everything, I think, but nothing perfect or positive. The interior, too, is square in some parts and round in others. Thus, you see, it has any amount of variety, if not very much beauty.

The town is not especially curious. There is little evidence of wealth or what the last generation would have called *gentility* about it. It cannot be considered a city of palaces, inhabited by rich people. At any rate as far as we saw or learned.

Many of the streets are narrow, and the houses small and poor, tenanted by hard-working people. Here and there we heard the sound of a loom. Some of the better houses have fine doorways and remarkable knockers, a few of which H. C. would have liked to wrench off and run away with—not from a spirit of mischief, but from a love of the antique.

The antique was also strongly represented in the human form: I never before saw so many old men and women together in one place. It must have been accident, for I cannot discover that Manacor is celebrated for its ancient population. But it was St. Methusalah's Day, and no doubt the old people had mustered to do him honour. You must not look for the day in your Ecclesiastical Almanack; it exists only in Manacor.

We were attracted by the courts of the Manacor houses. Not open to the sky as those of Palma, but for the most part forming a sort of large entrance hall. These courts are the ordinary living-rooms of the inhabitants. Their architecture is often fine, and the simplicity of their furniture is remarkable in its effect; giving to the whole a certain grandeur and refinement and sense of space, that we thought particularly charming.

Later on, when again sauntering through the town, they had lighted their old-fashioned lamps, and these courts, with their inhabitants, looked more picturesque than ever. Some of the women sat at their spinning-wheels; others were knitting or doing some kind of fancy work; many wore a peculiar head-dress that gave them quite a dignified appearance.

Often we stopped and admired, and if we felt presuming, they evidently did not think so. In many cases, had we only spoken the

language, I am quite sure that we might have gone in and found a very friendly welcome.

But as a rule the people of Manacor are very inferior in type and appearance to those of Palma. In the latter case, I have said that there is a certain beauty and refinement on which the eye lingers with pleasure. At Manacor it was not so. The type was of a much lower cast. Almost African features, swarthy complexions and coarse black hair; faces that did not harmonise; large mouths and, if you will forgive the expression, turned up noses, impudent and inquisitive, but not prepossessing.

We were struck with this difference of type in two towns separated only by a few hours' journey, and wondered how it was to be accounted for. To us, it made Manacor slightly depressing. These influences, I fear, have a greater effect upon me than is right or charitable. But even H. C. forsook poetry and descended to very decided prose. Sonnets to eyebrows were not to be thought of, and he became quite ordinarily and charmingly conversational.

As for the town itself, though without any point of beauty, it interests. Built on rising ground it shows up rather a wide surrounding tract of country, of which the most conspicuous objects were the quaint and curious windmills already described. In the gloaming, they look like great flying creatures with curious outspread wings. I am sure at seeing them you would have quite a shuddering sensation.

Decidedly the most picturesque part of the town was the square containing the church and hotel. We quite thought this on getting back to it. And, when on mounting the stairs we were greeted with a savoury smell, H. C. looked radiant.

Our hostess had prepared an excellent meal. The very cook himself was a recommendation to the inn. Broad, round and good-tempered, he evidently took a delight in his art as much for his own sake as for that of others. Nothing was a trouble to him. He would have sat up all night to oblige us, and did once remain at his post until midnight to minister to our want.

We were puzzled to know whether this personage was our host or merely our cook; the landlady's servant or her other half, I suppose I must not say her better half; but if anything, he was her better nine-tenths. It took an immense amount of tact and indirect enquiries to find this out; for if not the host, all this devotion would require a substantial recognition.

In this instance we found that the cook was only the cook. He allowed us within the sacred precincts of his kitchen, which was about seven times hotter than the black hole of Calcutta. We saw, admired and escaped. It is just as well, before dinner, not to dive into the mysteries of the coming meal. The chances are that you will be disenchanted, and the best appetite in the world will evaporate.

To-night we took care not to be disenchanted. On the other hand, we were sometimes mystified, and could not tell whether we were eating fish, flesh or fowl. We accepted all in faith ; and for dessert, our hostess gave us lovely apples and grapes, newly dried figs and freshly prepared Mallorcan almonds, baked brown and crisp.

We wandered out into the town in the darkness, admired the lights and shadows in the courts, the women at their wheels, or idly gossiping away last moments before retiring.

There was a moon. Such a moon ! Round as a shield and glowing with liquid light, pale as a ghost and silent as the dead. We lingered long about the plains, fascinated by this solemn silence and mystery, this light in darkness ; just sufficient to reveal all the expanse of country and give one a sense of intense loneliness. Very weird looked the windmills with their strange sails. The lights in the houses gradually went out ; doors were closed and fastened ; the town retired ; streets were deserted. Here and there a cloaked and shivering cavalier hastened along as if pursued by an enemy, for the night was fresh and chilly. We enjoyed it, but to these Mallorquins it no doubt felt a perishing atmosphere.

Far down in a narrow street, we saw the solitary watchman, cloaked, lanterned, heavy of tread, sad voiced. Listening, I shuddered ; fascinated, I followed. He perambulated the town, told the hour and the state of the night, and his voice was very much like that of the Palma watchman. They all have a certain keynote, and formula and rhythm : which like the wild music of the country, it is peculiar to themselves. Long may it remain so.

We tracked him to the confines of the town, and saw him disappear amidst several windmills, not far from the railway station. What the windmills wanted with the hour and the night, we could not tell. They were not inhabited, and no houses were near them.

Within the town the streets were dark and unlighted, probably in honour of the moon. But some of them were so narrow that her soft beams did not penetrate, and these looked suspicious and unsafe. Not that anything is really unsafe in Mallorca. The people are honest, or are said to be so. Banditti are unknown, and for the rest, there is not much to steal, and no one worth murdering.

We made our way back to the hotel, ready for a good night's rest, and expecting it. But the unexpected happens.

To begin with, beneath our windows, all night long, there went on a shouting of men ; a rolling of barrels, as if giants, having a game at football, were playing with a hundred balls instead of one. I have not been able to discover the reason for this Bacchanalian Pandemonium, or to understand why it should have gone on through all the dark hours of the night. In any other place, one might have thought these were the evil doings of smugglers, but here such things were impossible.

This was not our worst enemy. We had other powers of dark-

ness to fight against. Nothing less than inveterate and tormenting mosquitoes. But they did not affect me half as much as they did H. C. I had paid my tribute to them elsewhere: in Italy, and especially in Sicily. At Catania they half killed me, and I arrived at Palermo one fine night with a countenance all hills, valleys and inequalities, and what little life the mosquitoes had left expired when I beheld myself in the glass.

To-night these Manacor mosquitoes seemed to look upon me as an old acquaintance, and directed their attack chiefly upon H. C. It was his first introduction to the scourge, for in Palma and Miramar we had not found them; here they were in great force.

Oh, that horrible hum and buzz, just as you are falling into unconsciousness! It wakes you with a start and an earnestness and

MALLORCAN WASHING WELL.

a horror which put any further attempt at sleep to flight for hours afterwards.

So was it now. And then, when daylight began to glimmer, and there seemed a prospect of an hour or two's repose, out clashed the bells of the church, with the intention of waking up not only the town, but all the country round.

It was the most horrible and discordant din you can imagine. Not a Bacchanalian, but a clerical Pandemonium—if this is not a contradiction in terms. And, of course, those accustomed to the sound slumbered on, whilst, in our case, it finally banished sleep. In a fit of exasperation, I believe, if we could, we should have dynamited that tower.

Forbearance, after all, has its limits: very decided limits at five o'clock in the morning after a night of torment. I agree with Bismarck that there are times of irritability when to slam a door

violently behind you is a physical benefit: a relief which probably averts more serious consequences. For instance, it cannot be denied that it is much better to slam a door than to knock a man down. But the remedy must be kept for rare occasions. To slam a door every day of one's life would do away with its healing influence. Like everything else, it would weaken by repetition.

H. C. by morning light certainly looked an object for compassion. He was very distressed, no longer irritable, but desponding. If he returned to Palma in this condition, the fair Mallorquinas would give him neither smiles nor glances. Fifty doors slammed off their hinges would have done him no good. He took a sketch of a Manacor insect on the spot, after a night's attack upon him; and you will see at the head of this letter a true and unexaggerated likeness of this formidable creature.

However, we had come to see the caves, and so would have enough to distract his attention during the day.

There are two sets of caves in the neighbourhood. The Drajon caves and those of Arta. It takes a day to see each, and we thought it better to visit the smaller and least famous first. These are the caves of Manacor. By starting at nine or ten in the morning, we could be back by six o'clock at night.

We gathered together our photographic affairs and went down to the vehicle in waiting: the very same ramshackle old thing that had nearly proved our death last night. This was not the land of barouches, or of any open conveyance.

But our driver was very intelligent and good-tempered. He had "no Sassenach," but understood our signs. Half a sign often penetrated to his ready brain. Before we leave Mallorca, we shall have invented a new language without speech. For this we ought to be canonized or raised to the peerage. What benefactors shall we be to mankind: especially to those having to do with shrews who will have the last word. One really hardly wonders, in reading sundry accounts in the newspapers, that with some long-suffering men, it at last comes to a word and a blow, and the blow comes first.

It was the loveliest morning, with blue skies and warm sunshine. The inside of the vehicle soon grew intolerable, and we mounted beside the driver: a seat uncomfortable as ingenuity could have made it, but there was air to breathe. Even here the roof extended over our heads and made it difficult to sit upright. Every now and then, our heads came into such contact with it that our hats lost all shape and gave us a most forsaken appearance. But there was no one to see, and we did not care.

The drive, through a country flat and uninhabited, had no strong points about it. I don't think we met a creature the whole way. Yet it was a quiet, pleasant experience, for the sake of all the sunshine and blue sky and pure air. Its loveliness also gave one a sense of repose and of being out of reach of the world. Our good-

humoured driver kept us alive by his endeavours to talk intelligibly. Exhilarated by our surroundings, mosquitoes and the night's disturbances were forgotten.

The lesser troubles of life, after all, are soon banished. There are indeed some who almost as quickly shake off life's greater cares. Perhaps they are to be envied, though I don't think I would choose to be one of them. Yet in many ways they have the best of it as far as this world is concerned, and live the longest. Their motto is "away with melancholy," and some would hold this the truest philosophy. Care, you know, is said to have killed even a cat.

At last came low sandhills, with gentle undulations, and a small natural harbour: the end of our drive. Hills separated to admit the water, and give shelter to a few fishing-boats, lying high and dry upon the beach. Between us and them ran the creek or harbour. At our feet sparkled the pure white sand, and over it rolled the green, shallow, wonderfully transparent waters of the Mediterranean. Behind us was much grassy land; a heathy common, with lovely blooms and desert spaces.

The omnibus came to an anchor. The boy the driver had brought with him was left in charge of the horse, whilst the man went off with us to the caves. They were about two hundred yards away, and a small and not very imposing doorway admitted us.

The guide lighted candles, and we explored. The caves, though pretty and worth visiting, are nothing in comparison with those of Arta. They are natural, of course, and are divided into different rooms, after the manner of other caves: each room bearing a name according to the fantastic form it has assumed; which form lies in imagination as much as in anything else.

Most of the rooms were low and arched, but the rock was split and honeycombed into a thousand shapes. Stalactites hung from the roofs of all lengths and of every consistency, fine, delicate and fragile as a needle, or large and hard as a bar of iron, and when struck giving out a musical sound. Fluted columns rose and spread their caps like feathery palms, apparently supporting the roof above them.

From the candles, a thousand small lights and flashes were reflected, and ghostly shadows played at hide-and-seek. Now we descended into shallow depths; now wound round a column into a new compartment and a new scene; now went onwards into what appeared to be the beginning of a journey into the recesses of the earth.

The atmosphere was moist and suffocating. It almost seemed that every new turning would open up a Vulcan's Forge, and Vulcan himself hard at work at his anvil would hardly have surprised us. The foundations of several of the rooms were pools or lakes of water, black as Erebus, into which we more than once nearly fell headlong, from the darkness and irregularities of our pathway. Would

they have proved a fathomless abyss, no deeper depth beyond? They were forbidding enough for anything.

We were less than half an hour in the caves, but when we came out, the broad sunshine and free air were like Heaven itself. The entrance was locked up again, and we returned to our omnibus.

We had now earned our luncheon; and in the shade cast by the shandaradar, sat and enjoyed our nectar and ambrosia, having first given the driver and the boy their full share of the hamper's goodly store.

We had liked the caves very well, but enjoyed this sylvan solitude far more. It would be difficult to describe the beauty of this natural harbour: those green slopes, between which flashed and played that crystal water.

The day was so hot, the sea so absolutely calm, that when we saw a fisherman go down to his boat, we hailed him and made him understand that a row or a sail about the coast was the one thing wanting to complete our happiness.

In a few moments, a bronzed and weather-beaten old Mallorquin and his son—both more than commonly intelligent—rowed across the creek and placed themselves at our service. The driver and the boy, taking French leave, also stepped in. This we had not intended, as too much ballast on a calm day is worse than too little; but we wisely said nothing.

Once clear of the harbour, the men hoisted sail, and for a couple of hours we had a glorious time of it: a perfect luxury of lazy enjoyment. As the boat receded from the shore, each point of land opened out, and on either side, for miles, might be traced the outline of the coast: now shelving down to the water, now rising in abrupt cliffs, full of beauty and grandeur.

The old man told us the name of each headland, and pointed out all the little unseen creeks and harbours that existed on the coast: gave us a geographical lesson, indicated the positions of Spain and Sicily, and the islands of the Levant. Then he brought out a keg and bade us take a deep, deep draught, not of good Rhine wine, but of strong waters. The most delicious anisette it was ever my fortune to taste.

H. C. accepted it suspiciously, but fear soon vanished in delight. His eyes began to sparkle and his face to flush, as he returned again and again to the charge. Even the old man at last looked anxious and fidgetty, at a deeper, deeper draught than even he had ever dreamed of or indulged in. I do not believe that the next day's inequalities on H. C.'s usually placid brow were *all* the result of mosquito bites.

At the end of a couple of hours, we returned. Not that we had had enough of this Elysian existence, this being gently wafted about by outspread canvass wings: but a long drive lay before us. The old man, too, had to go a-fishing and earn his daily bread, and his time was up.

ARTA.

We made for the harbour, and even in twenty and thirty feet of water distinctly saw the bottom. The old man landed us where the glistening sand and the white-edged water met. We satisfied his demands, and watched him and his broad-shouldered son put out to sea again.

Then we mounted our apparatus, took a view of all this loveliness, and carried away a souvenir of our day. But no remembrance was needed. It was well-fixed in the memory where it remains. There are days and places, little incidents and episodes, that impress themselves so firmly upon the mind that they remain treasured for ever.

We returned to the hotel in due time, where the chef had put forth his best powers. These we appreciated, our spirits hardly diminished by any fear of the probably sleepless night that lay before us.

I think you would have laughed could you have seen H. C. for an hour and a half perambulating our room, candle in one hand, slipper in the other, endeavouring to exterminate the race of Mallorcan mosquitoes. It was great slaughter, not of the innocent but of the guilty. But for this raid, what would have been the consequence I know not: annihilation certainly.

Yet still they came. The more we killed, the more seemed to take their place. If H. C.'s mild and placid countenance could ever look revengeful it was now. After every successful skirmish, he gave a contented growl, like a bear that has just dispatched a human being and feels therefrom a comfortable sense of duty. Finally he retired for the night with a pillow-case slipped over his head. They found him out all the same. They would find you out if you were encased in iron or plaster of Paris.

Last night's Pandemonium with the giants and the barrels did not fail. It was louder and longer than ever. Sleep was out of the question. Then before daylight began the clerical Pandemonium amongst the bells in the tower. I have heard of an old song called "The devil among the tailors." If, in this instance, you will substitute bells for tailors, and add an army of a thousand imps into the bargain, you will gain a faint idea of what we went through. As far as the hotel was concerned, we had nothing else to find fault with; but then these three causes each represented five hundred causes of complaint rolled into one: a sum total of fifteen hundred grievances.

Yesterday's excursion was longer and more formidable. The caves of Arta were more distant than those of Manacor. Many people give two days to it, sleeping at the primitive inn of Arta. The whole thing cannot be done in less than twelve hours, and it may easily take fourteen or sixteen. We were about fifteen hours from first to last.

We started soon after eight in the morning, our driver the same, but not our conveyance. It was after the same uncomfortable pattern, but still older and more shabby than the other. That one probably was considered too good and recherché to do the Arta

excursion and run the risks of an eventful journey. To us it made no difference. When you have reached a certain depth, you may as well go lower still, and so be hung for a sheep as a lamb.

Again the loveliest, warmest, most sunny weather. From outside the town, Manacor looked imposing. To the left, a long row of windmills gave their character to the landscape. One of them was close at hand, and from the upper part of the stone-work we took a photograph of the town, that, church-crowned, rose on gentle heights. Ploughed fields lay between it and us, bare and naked, but later on, to be clad with the verdure of vines or cereals. Distant hills bounded the plain. Our road lay away from these, towards Arta and the sea coast.

A portion of the drive took us through long stretches of what looked like plantations of young trees. Once we came to a great tract of the Arbutus trees, with their fresh green leaves and beautiful fruit : a fruit delicious as well as beautiful.

We roamed about this lovely plantation and ate the fruit—I fear not in moderation. I can only warn those who find themselves in a similar situation not to do likewise. It may be tempting, but it is dangerous. In appearance, as you know, it is something like a large strawberry, growing on trees instead of only lowly plants.

These young plantations gave one almost the fresh and delightful feelings I have often had in Norway, where, mile after mile and day after day, you may enjoy an endless forest drive. But faithful to my first affections I do not for a moment place the beautiful but enervating land of the South into comparison with the happiness and bracing influence one enjoys under Northern skies.

Arta, as we approached, looked quite striking and romantic. In this respect, I should place it almost first of all the Mallorcan towns. Like Manacor, it stands on a hill, but is more picturesque, with its Roman-looking Church and ancient Monastery.

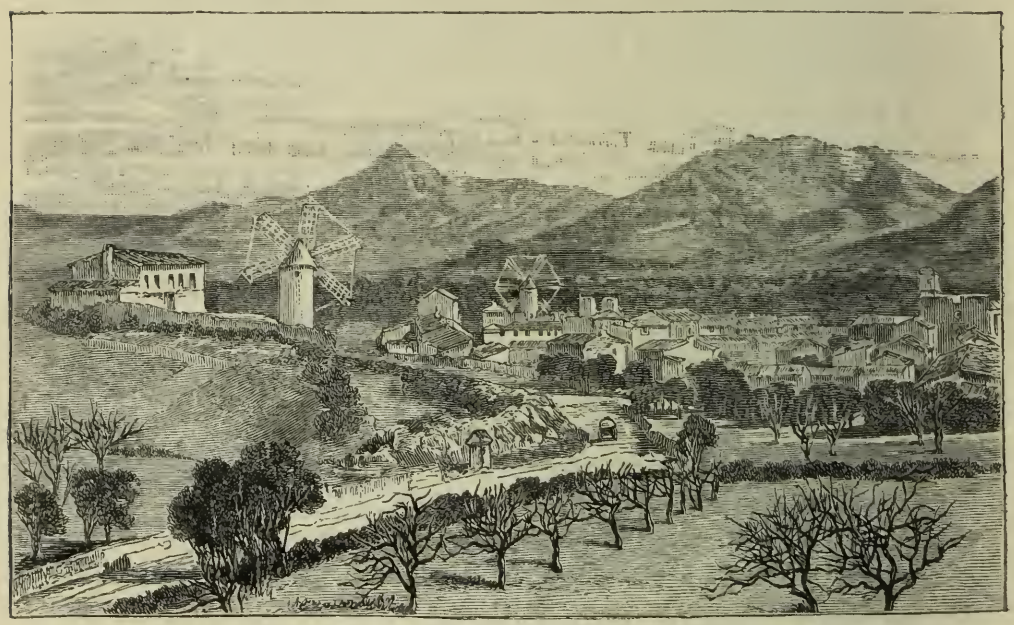
Before entering Arta, we stopped to take a photograph ; climbed the roadside bank into a garden, where the cactus plant flourished and the prickly pear abounded. The fruit no longer tempted us : we had suffered, and had no desire to repeat the experiment.

From the house belonging to the garden there issued a fair Mallorquina, who betrayed the usual desire to be taken, and placed herself in becoming attitude. Our driver took his omnibus—of which he is proud, whatever our own opinion—down the road, and begged that we would bring it within the radius of our view. All this was satisfactorily accomplished, and I hope to enclose you a specimen in my next letter.

Arta, like the famous city of Eden, was less picturesque in fact than from a distance. Familiarity bred a certain contempt. The streets were narrow ; the people seemed poor ; the houses small and white. But I do not think we saw the best and most ancient part of Arta. We had no time to explore, and were almost sorry we had

not arranged to stay here the night. The inn certainly did not look inviting, but in travelling, one must be prepared for all sorts and conditions of resting-places. There is a certain pleasure in roughing it; a flavour of Bohemianism; a sense of self-denial, none the less because the virtue is one of necessity.

Here it was necessary to look up the guide to the caves. Our drive was by no means over, though noon had struck its hour. The guide was easily found, but it took him some time to beautify and adorn. He finally appeared, a very presentable object; young, strong, comely, and picturesquely attired. He, too, proved good-natured and intelligent, and was quite as ready to enjoy the excursion as we were.



PLAINS OF ARTA.

We went on through the plains towards the coast. To the left, amongst distant hills, nestled a small, ancient-looking town, that we felt would be interesting to explore. Time forbade. I have forgotten its name.

Presently we reached a curious castellated sort of building, with loop-holes for windows, the freak or folly of some strange Mallorquin. And here, for the first time in Mallorca, we saw a pomegranate tree, and the driver intimated that we were at liberty to pick the fruit. But the forbidden no longer charmed. If an Eve had offered us an apple, we should not have taken it.

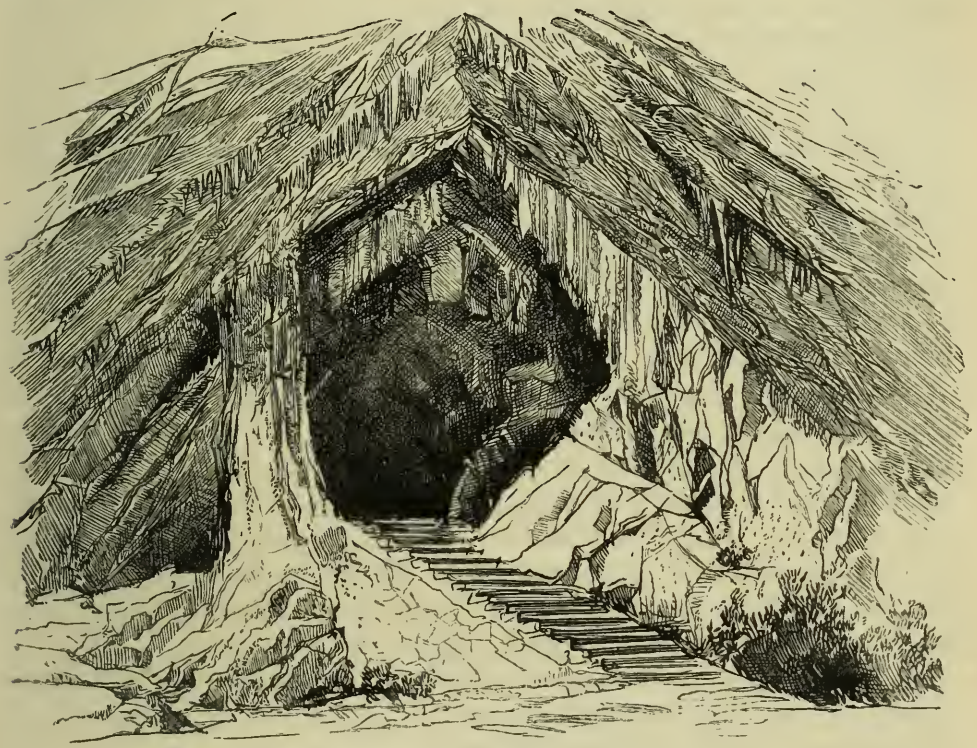
At last we reached the coast. It was very different from that in the neighbourhood of the Caves of Manacor. Here the cliffs were high, rocky and grand. Green hills, wide and undulating, gave one a fine feeling of expanse.

Again the sea ran up into a creek or harbour, but there were no

boats to be seen. No chance of a sail to-day, even if time permitted

A river ran down the land towards the sea, and its depth seemed to surprise the guide. It was narrow, and so I accepted his offer of crossing it upon his shoulders. This was not dignified, but saved trouble.

Away he went with his precious burden. The first thing he did was to step upon a loose quicksand, and land us both comfortably in the water up to our knees. Another man behind us luckily pulled me out before I went in head over heels. But we all got over at last, safe if not perfectly sound.



ENTRANCE TO CAVES OF ARTA.

A long and steep climb led to the entrance of the cave: a walk, beautiful as walk could be: wild and lovely, with everything grand and inspiring about it: the far-stretching, shimmering sea; opposite, green hills, high and wide, and the rocky cliff which formed our present pathway.

It really was paradise. On these occasions a feeling of utter and complete bliss and repose takes possession of one. Nothing the world can give for a moment compares with this sense of beauty and perfection found only in those retired, untrodden bye-ways of earth.

And yet there is ever and always a certain something that seems wanting, which tinges one's pleasure, however great, with pain. Is it that "Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God created."

We reached the mouth of the caves, which yawned far above us, and to which we ascended by a sort of natural staircase in the rock. A cavernous hole admitted to what might be called the entrance-hall or court. Ferns grew in the crevices: and we passed from Southern warmth to the chilling regions of the North. The caves of Manacor were suffocating; these of Arta were the opposite.

The guide lighted torches, which not only flamed, but smoked desperately. It is a heart-breaking pity their constant usage has spoilt the caves. They ought to be white and glistening, and if they were so, one can scarcely imagine how grand and magnificent they would be. As it is, almost every part of them, roof, pillows, stalactites, are black as Erebus.

We descended into the depths, bearing our torches and looking like demons. The caves are amongst the wonders of the world: extensive, having many chambers, large and high. They have taken all sorts of fantastic forms, all on a grand scale. Immense pillars stretch upwards, fluted and beautiful as if designed by genius. Aisles like a cathedral, and roofs that rival the loveliest gothic architecture are multiplied. Pulpits and chapels, witches' cauldrons, organs and galleries—everything abounds.

The guide had brought blue lights, and stationing us at certain points, he went off and set a match to them, with indescribable effect. Wonderful and unearthly scenes rose up as by magic, more wonderful than anything in the Arabian Nights. In the way of caves, we had never seen anything like it, and probably never shall again. From their extreme and peculiar beauty and grandeur, they must be almost without rival. And, I repeat, that if they only possessed their natural colour, and had not been smoked to blackness by these heathenish torches, nothing in Fairy Land could exceed their marvel. The caves of Manacor were almost blotted out of memory. These of Arta will remain vivid pictures in one's memory for ever. It is hardly wrong to say that they alone are worthy a visit to Mallorca. Such, at any rate, was their effect upon us.

We returned to daylight and warmth, and sat a while on the rocks beneath the entrance to think and talk over what we had seen, and to revel in the flashing waters of the Mediterranean. Then we rounded the cliff again, descended to sea level, despatched the men for the hamper, and, in a small wood, under shade of the trees, upon an immense slab elevated upon stone pedestals, enjoyed a sylvan repast. Not far off was another remnant of the stone age, where the men equally enjoyed theirs, each after his kind. We "laughed and quaffed the muscadel," in this instance represented by the red wine of the country.

The moments passed and we paid no heed. The sun declined, and we refused the warning. The shadows lengthened, and we only acted as if daylight would last for ever. But nothing lasts for ever.

"Change and decay in all around I see." The wisest man may take this for his motto, and it will not play him false.

So that day, too, passed away. The sunshine faded out of the hills, and, when we had recrossed the creek, we felt that we had not begun the return journey too soon.

Night was falling when we entered Arta and said good-bye to our pleasant and hardworking guide.

What makes me regret these constant partings with people of whom I know so little, if there has been that in their faces and expression which has interested me? Is it a virtue or a weakness to long to know more of them, their histories, their past lives, even their future, if it could be told? Almost wish to find out that they have a burden to bear, a sorrow or a care, for the pleasure of relieving it? It is a pain to feel that they have gone their ways for ever, and come weal or woe, no sympathy of mine, tangible or mental, can ever touch them again. Others are not thus affected by chance acquaintances, and why should I be pained and concerned about people and circumstances beyond my province or control? But there are those whom, often at the first glance, we feel as if we had known for a hundred years or in some other state of existence: whilst for others, the width between the heavens and the earth would seem too little space for separation.

Soon after leaving Arta, night fell, and our drive grew monotonous. The uneasy vehicle forbade repose; we were too tired and too full of thought for conversation. We rattled into Manacor towards midnight, but had one consolation; the mosquitoes would have so much the less of human enjoyment.

The cook was at his post, the landlady and her maidens were brisk and lively as if it had been midday. We got up steam and made ourselves tea, and they gave us milk. But even here milk is as scarce as gold. We passed a third sleepless night, and H. C.'s state went from bad to worse. A fourth night would have been the death of one of us, if not of both. We had, therefore, some consolation in leaving.

But the good people of the inn seemed inconsolable, and a procession, headed by the hostess and concluded by the portly cook, escorted us to the omnibus. There was wringing of hands and pallid sorrowful faces, all harrowing to one's feelings but gratifying to one's vanity. Of this vice or virtue, I possess very little—I suppose the man does not exist in whom it is absolutely and utterly wanting—and so it is fortunate that H. C. has his own share and mine too: a good supply for both to draw upon.

Palma once more. Palma de Mallorca. Dear to our hearts as a haven of refuge, a return to civilisation. This little familiar room—how often I shall see it, when, for us both, Palma will have passed away.

MOLLY AT THE "MITRE."

"WELL, Molly, do you like it?"

"It is perfectly lovely?"

"Beyond your dreams?"

"Far and away!"

Molly had her elbows on the window-sill of the ladies' coffee-room at the "Mitre," and was looking down upon the High for the first time in her life. It was between three and four in the afternoon, and Lady Bussell's party were resting, after a morning of sight-seeing and a lively lunch, before starting on the second part of their programme: a tea party at Mr. Hayward's rooms, "the Boats," and the Fête at Worcester.

They had the room pretty much to themselves, for nearly everyone was hurrying down to the river for the afternoon procession of boats, which Lady Bussell had interdicted with a view to keeping her girls fresh for the evening. She had found the current number of *Mayfair*, and was sleeping peacefully behind it, conscious that Harry Hayward "meant something" with Molly, and that the chicken salad and light hock of the "Mitre" were unsurpassable. Flo Bussell, who had a mania for improving her mind, had found a guide book, and was cramming up information to be produced at the tea party.

Mr. Hayward had been lunching with them, but had at last torn himself away from Molly's neighbourhood: conscious that his rooms required a considerable amount of righting before they could be pronounced ready for the reception of a distinguished party of ladies.

Only Jack and Molly, brother and sister, and niece and nephew to Lady Bussell, seemed to find the humours of the High inexhaustible. Jack leant against the frame of the window and looked down with somewhat supercilious approval at his pretty sister. Every now and then he thought fit to reprove her, or give her a hint about *les convenances*. "Sit back, Molly; I won't have those fellows staring at you."

"What fellows?" Molly sat back obediently for an instant, then slipped forward into her place. "Those two boys? why, they can't see up here. And if they did, Jack, they are mere children!"

"Sit back, I tell you," Jack growled. "You're much too pr—too conspicuous in that white frock. That little idiot Dacres of New was making eyes at you with all his might!"

"Was he?" Molly asked. "I didn't know; I thought he squinted dreadfully. Very well, Jack, I'll drag my chair in a bit." And she pushed it the very smallest appreciable fraction from the window.

Parties of men passed and repassed below. Families of girls and mothers, with brothers and friends in attendance, turned down the

narrow street leading to Christchurch and the river. Several loiterers appeared deeply absorbed in the display of striped flannels which decorated Foster's windows. The plate glass reflected the flower-decked window-sills of the "Mitre" opposite, Jack's stalwart figure, and the girl in the white dress.

Presently Jack yawned. "I ought to go round to my rooms and change, and see about things a bit before we go to Hayward's; only I don't like leaving you here alone."

"But I'm not dull a bit; and there are Aunty and Flo!"

Jack looked over his shoulder and then at his sister. "A pretty pair of chaperons." For Flo Bussell's Guide-book had fallen face-foremost on a fine print of the Ratcliffe Library and she was sound asleep in the horsehair arm-chair.

"Does one require chaperoning even indoors and all alone at Oxford?" Molly asked innocently.

"I don't like ——" Jack began; then he broke of: "There's old Ransome, I declare; coming up here to call on you most likely! You like Ransome, don't you Molly? He'll do to talk to you while I'm ——"

And Jack was tumbling down the stairs of the "Mitre" and across the street before Molly could answer. The only ridiculous idea that crossed Molly's brain was that in French there is no definition of "to like!"

Presently George Ransome tapped at the door and came in with elaborate care not to disturb Lady Bussell and her daughter. Molly stood up with one finger on her lips, her right hand held out. "Oxford is the most delightful spot on earth!" was shining in her eyes, only George Ransome was rather short-sighted.

"How do you do, Miss Verey?" he said. "Your brother told me to come up and call on you, though your aunt and cousin were not to be disturbed."

"Then you weren't coming of your own accord?" said Molly tartly.

She didn't know why she spoke so. Only somehow she had thought so much of meeting George Ransome again, and now that he had come she was shy and ill at ease.

Ransome looked surprised. He had never known Molly anything but sweet-tempered.

"Indeed I have been looking forward to seeing you ever since your brother told me you were coming up with Lady Bussell, and—and—I went round by the station this morning when you arrived, to see if I could be of any assistance. But you had Hayward and Forbes and your brother, and half a dozen other men; so I thought I had better sheer off."

"Very much relieved to think you had not to carry a bonnet-box or a nondescript bundle of rugs and umbrellas."

So he *had* been at the station after all!

Molly's heart gave a bound as she recollected how assiduously

Harry Hayward had pressed forward to welcome his chum's sister and his own country neighbour; and how she had filled his hands with the multitudinous etceteras which Lady Bussell accumulated on a two hours' journey: but why did her tongue speak so sharply?

George was astonished. He was a simple man, not given to much modern repartee, and he answered seriously:

"You know I don't mind what I carry. Have you forgotten the black kettle at your aunt's picnic last summer? But my time is very much filled up now, you know—no, how should you know anything about it? I am reading very hard, and a good bit depends on it. So when I had seen you had plenty of people to attend to you, I went back to my work."

"And have been reading hard ever since?" Molly, who taught you to sneer? It is a very unladylike accomplishment.

"I confess my reading was not particularly satisfactory this morning. It was haunted by visions of ——"

Ransome was a shy man, and in earnest, and he hesitated, for Molly's face only expressed the most contemptuous indifference.

"Of what?"

"Oh, of—of—Hayward. You see he ought to be reading for his degree, and he hasn't done a day's work this term. I promised his father to give an eye to him, but we are quite in different sets here, and ——"

"It doesn't much matter for Harry Hayward, does it?" said Molly, loftily. "His father's such a rich man, and Harry is to settle down at Coombe at once. Surely it is a matter of indifference whether he is entitled to write B.A. after his name or not?"

Poor George Ransome felt the implied snub. *His* father was a country clergyman, and *his* degree meant his future. But he still replied politely.

"You are not so keen about academic distinction as you used to be, Miss Verey. Do you recollect the lecture you gave your brother and Hayward about more serious views of life? I wish you would repeat it in Hayward's case; perhaps he would listen to you." And George Ransome sighed.

"Oh, I've seen something of Oxford now," said Molly, with her five hours' experience. "It seems to me there is very little good in setting up to be wiser than your neighbours. As for the degrees, I shouldn't wonder if the examiners drew the names out of a hat; and if they did, I dare say it would answer just as well. Besides, in after life, nobody asks 'What sort of a degree did so and so take?' It is only a trumpery little excitement got up here to keep you all amused and in a good humour."

"Indeed!" said George stiffly.

"And in your case, apparently, it has failed in its effect," ventured Molly. What evil spirit was in control of her tongue this afternoon?

"It is sometimes wholesome to hear what one's friends think of

one's own little hopes and ambitions," said the young man, rising and holding out his hand. He had come so full of happiness to tell Molly something of all that was in his mind; perhaps to give her some hint, intangible enough, but that the Molly of last summer would have understood, of what "taking a good degree" meant for him.

"Must you be going?" Molly asked, looking nonchalantly out of the window. "Won't you stay till Jack and Harry Hayward come and fetch us to tea?"

"I hoped you would have come to me. I spoke to Verey about it, but he told me Hayward had been beforehand," said Ransome, waving his last little flag of truce.

"You were so deep in your degree, you see," Molly replied. "Well, good-bye, Mr. Ransome. I suppose it is unnecessary to wish you 'Good luck.' In such a serious matter, you will prefer relying on your own exertions. How very superior you will feel as you sit burning your midnight oil to-night to us who are 'frivolling' at the Worcester Fête!"

"Are you going to Worcester and back to town afterwards?"

"We sleep here, and go home the first thing in the morning. Aunty and Flo can't be persuaded to give up another day of their beloved Season."

"Then I shall not see you again?"

"I suppose not, if you're not to be tempted out to-night. Are you not likely to be down at Coombe in the long vacation?"

"I think I am going to take some fellows somewhere to read?"

"Well, if you will insist upon being wiser than the ancients, you will miss a lot of fun. There's going to be all sorts of rejoicings when Harry Hayward goes home for good."

"Whether he passes or not?"

"Oh, yes; I don't think old Mr. Hayward will know the difference."

"And you do not care?"

"Not particularly."

"Good-bye, Miss Verey."

"Good-bye, Mr. Ransome."

"Who was that?" asked Lady Bussell, waking up as George Ransome shut the door not quite so carefully as he had opened it. "Mr. Ransome, eh? Poor Molly! have you had to entertain him all alone? that was too bad. I thought you were chattering with Harry Hayward, and this is such a ridiculous number of the *Mayfair*, it kept me quite interested. I never read these Society papers except by chance or on a journey, and I think it a perfect waste of money and only an encouragement to a great deal of foolishness to *buy* them, but certainly they are very clever sometimes. I suppose Mr. Ransome saw I was absorbed, and Flo—sound asleep, I declare!"

When once Lady Bussell began talking, everyone else might go off duty. That was fortunate for Molly, for she had a queer, choking

feeling in her throat, and the High Street, on which she still looked down, had grown misty and dim.

As she turned back again to Lady Bussell and the "Mitre" sitting-room and every-day life, her eyes lit on a little parcel of papers and books fastened with a strap. It had not been there before, she was certain. George Ransome must have put it down at the back of his chair when he first came in, and forgotten it when he left.

In a moment Molly had slipped it into the folds of her grey jacket which lay beside her. She had thought all communication between herself and George was at end; done to death by the inexplicable unruliness of her own foolish tongue, which had played her heart so false. Yet here was a straw floating up out of the deep waters which she thought, in the ready despair of nineteen, had gone over her soul.

"Come, come, Molly!" called Lady Bussell from the door; "Jack is waiting. Take care how you come down these uneven stairs. Bring a shawl or something; the evenings get chilly by the river."

But Molly was stuffing the grey jacket to the very back of the rickety little chiffonier, behind a pile of old *Graphics* and a cruet-stand which had been pensioned off as an ornament. And when she ran after her Aunt, her cheeks were pink enough to support the assertion that she found it stiflingly hot and extra wraps were unnecessary.

But two hours afterwards, Lady Bussell's words came true, as they very often did and as she never failed to point out to her audience. It *did* become very chilly down by the river.

Harry Hayward's hospitality of scalding tea as black as Stockholm tar, strawberries forced at Coombe and forwarded for the occasion, and cakes of all sorts: from the humble "mixed biscuit" to the richest plum, against which even Molly's despair was not proof: had been dispensed to the accompaniment of much laughter.

Harry, in his capacity of host, could not devote himself entirely to Molly. Lady Bussell's physical and Flo Bussell's intellectual requirements had to be attended to. But the young men who made up the party saw well enough how the land lay to mutter among themselves: "Lucky fellow, Hayward, with a girl like that chosen for him, and a governor, all smiles, waiting to bless him and set him up in life." And they addressed Molly with a sort of awed admiration which flattered Hayward not a little.

Molly herself thought them all pleasant young men, but woefully youthful. She asked them questions and tried to listen to the answers; sugared their tea and did her best to give that beverage a feminine flavour; treated her host exactly as she did her brother Jack. But all the time her mind was revolving round that little parcel of papers lying at the back of the chiffonier at the "Mitre" under the folds of her tweed jacket: the tiny raft which fate had sent her and on which she must contrive to launch her last hope.

Down at the Boats, her plan began to take form and shape. Even while she stood on Jack's college barge and watched the procession pass, with all its interest of an unexpected "bump" and a popular college as Head of the River, she had made up her mind what to do. How to do it depended on her opportunity.

And the opportunity came.

The band under the grey walls of Christ Church was playing airs from the "Mikado," unconscious of incongruity; Jack was doing duty with Flo Bussell, whose erudition was at once "a torment and a treasure" to her cousin. Lady Bussell, who had taken Hayward's arm, somewhat to that gentleman's discomposure, was expounding her approval of early marriages, far in the rear. Molly found herself for the first moment alone with young Forbes: the simplest, most boyish, most anxious to be of use of all undergraduates.

"Will you take me back to the "Mitre," Mr. Forbes?" Molly asked, with sudden resolution. "I am tired, and it is cold, and I have no shawl. No! don't rush off to fetch anything. I would really rather go back and rest a little. And then perhaps you will return and explain to the others that I had had enough of the band and the crowd, and would prefer to sit quiet for half an hour till it is time to get ready for Worcester."

Forbes felt immensely flattered by this appeal. He took Molly quickly away out of the crowd, and by short cuts and quiet corners brought her speedily back to the "Mitre."

There was a delightful flavour of outdoing Hayward, almost a soupçon of an innocent elopement about the whole transaction. He wondered if he ought to offer Miss Verey his arm under the circumstances, but contented himself with carrying her parasol and murmuring observations in an almost unintelligible voice, supposed to be specially adapted to the senses of the overfatigued.

And when he left her at the door of the hotel, he was convinced that her half hour's rest and consequent reappearance at the fête at Worcester depended entirely on his skilful management of Lady Bussell and Hayward.

"Depend on me, Miss Verey. I'll keep them quite quiet, and they sha'n't be a bit anxious about you. You aren't really ill, are you? But I won't let them get back for a good hour yet, so that you can have a nice little sleep, or—or a cup of tea, or anything, and be quite fresh for the evening."

An hour to herself: before Hayward's compliments, Jack's brotherly requirements, Lady Bussell's good-natured worrying began again! How much could be done in an hour towards righting an afternoon's mistakes and the whole future of two lives?

The waiter of the "Mitre" stepped out upon Molly as she went up the stairs to the coffee-room.

"A gentleman called, Miss, while you was out—name of Ransome—asked for Lady Bussell's party, and went upstairs to look for a

parcel of papers he said he had dropped previous. Gentleman didn't find the papers, Miss, and seemed very much put out; said if any of your party had seen them would you kindly send a message, as they was of great importance?"

Molly leant against the staircase and wrote a few words on the back of a card of Jack's with the little pencil that hung at her chain: "I put your papers for safety at the back of the chiffonier in the 'Mitre' coffee-room window. Can you fetch them?" Then, doubling the card in two, she directed it to G. Ransome, Esq., Magdalen College.

"Can you send someone at once with this to Magdalen? I won't send the papers, as they are valuable; but I have told the gentleman that they are safe, and he can fetch them. Please let there be no delay, as the papers are of importance."

For a third time that day, George Ransome ran up the stairs of the "Mitre." He did not tap at the door, for every visitor in Oxford was away in the Long Walk, but walked boldly into the half-dark room, skirting the chairs which stood about in disorder, by the faint light which came from the gas of the dining-room. Between the curtains which divided the two rooms, waiters were darting to and fro with preparations for the dinners which would all be wanted simultaneously in half an hour; but the sitting-room was quite empty, the windows open, the whole place bearing the air of having served its purpose.

He groped round the large table to the little group of chairs by the window where he and Molly had sat that afternoon. Chiffonier? There had been a chiffonier somewhere in the corner, he believed, but where on earth was it now?

George Ransome was not in the pleasantest of moods, and every fresh little check irritated him almost beyond endurance. He had meant, after his interview with Molly, to fling himself into his work and slave like a horse; even that consolation had been denied him through the loss of his papers.

He pushed a chair hastily aside, and felt about tentatively in the gloom. "Confound the chiffonier; it ought to be there. I must strike a match." And then his fingers came in contact with something soft, and he jumped back, hastily apologising. "I beg a thousand pardons; I did not know anyone was there!"

"Have you come to look for your books, Mr. Ransome?"

"Molly! Is it you?"

"Yes." For her life Molly could not think of anything else to say; no smart repartee; no sarcastic reminder that her acquaintances generally called her Miss Verey.

"I thought you were away at the river. What has brought you back by yourself? Are you ill?"

"No, I am not ill—at least, only a little tired." She could not resist the anxious tenderness of his tone, and her voice was so thin

and shaking that it was as well to give some excuse for it. "But I thought you would want your packet—and—and I knew where it was ——"

"Did you send for me? not Jack?"

"Yes."

"Then you cared, Molly?"

"Of course I did!"

A great many unexpected things happen every day; others, which appear certain, are curiously averted at the last moment.

Harry Hayward's proposal never came off at the Worcester Fête after all: which was a great disappointment to him and to Lady Bussell and to old Mr. Hayward down at Coombe, who thought he had arranged so cleverly for his son's early marriage with his special favourite, Lady Bussell's pretty niece. Family arrangements do not always hold good if the young people on both sides have not been consulted. But, luckily, Harry Hayward was young enough to get over his disappointment long before he took his degree.

"From information received," Lady Bussell excused her niece from appearing at the evening fête. She was justly indignant, poor lady, at the advantage that had been taken of her; and most of her wrath was levelled at young Forbes, who had insisted on taking them round by innumerable quadrangles to look for a moon which they discovered did not rise till 2 a.m. Had she gone straight back to the hotel, there would have been no opportunity for this stupid quixotic entanglement of Molly's with a man without a penny, and she would quietly have fallen in with her aunt's plans and accepted Harry.

Jack, too, was angry for his chum's sake, and immensely annoyed on his own account that he had never had a notion of how the land lay. But he was too just to deny that Ransome was a first-rate fellow, and that Molly, "with her economical ways and her continual preaching about work and duty and all that," could but make an excellent wife for a poor man. "Besides, Molly's three hundred a-year would have been lost among Hayward's thousands, whereas it will make quite a sensation among Ransome's people!"

This reflection gave Jack considerable satisfaction after he had got over his first vexation.

And when the Lists were published, George Ransome's name was among the Honours, and as she read it, Molly, though she was not given to tears, felt a great lump rise in her throat and a mist come across her eyes, through which she seemed to see the bright sunshine and the shifting groups of the High Street from the windows of the "Mitre."

MY ELDEST SISTER.

By Lady Dunboyne.

CERTAINLY we Trevelyans are an eminently good-looking family!

I say so with the less fear of laying myself under an imputation of vanity, because it long ago became a settled point that I, the sixth member thereof, am the only one who can possibly be called plain, and that, as brother Max consolingly observes, would not be the case in any less favoured circle.

But Ella, our youngest, is the very ideal of a lovely girl of eighteen, and Gertrude and Kathleen were recognised London beauties before they were snapped up at the close of their respective introductory seasons.

Then where would you find handsomer young fellows than Max, our Guardsman, or Lawrence, just entered at Christ Church?

And Janet—dear old Janet, the mainstay and guardian of us all—she must have been pretty, long ago—in the same style as the rest, dark-haired and bright complexioned—before her brown eyes began to show crows'-feet at the corners and her cheeks to grow thin, with the colour in fixed red lines, instead of that lovely bright flush which comes and goes. But my musings on the merits of my family are interrupted by Ella's gay voice.

"Gracie, Gracie! you incorrigible dawdle; do you intend to go to Wichnor this morning, or not?"

I jump up in a hurry. The pony-cart is at the door, and Janet, as usual, on the watch.

"Children, are you ever coming? Don't forget my list of commissions, and especially be sure to bring the ice. Cook is almost in despair, and the weather grows hotter every day."

Five minutes more, and we are bowling merrily along the three miles between our home, Brookfield Manor, and the cathedral town of Wichnor.

It is Saturday and market-day, and we are engaged to lunch with some of our friends, and expect to obtain a cursory view of a good many others, either in the cathedral or the close. Wherefore I have exposed my new frock to the perils of a dusty drive, and Ella has donned her Paris hat, well knowing that it makes her laughing brown eyes and delicately tinted face more irresistible than ever.

But Janet's commissions prove more troublesome than we have anticipated, and we have barely finished them in time for luncheon. This, at Canon Lightwood's hospitable board, is always a lengthy performance, and we have to hurry off almost as soon as it is over, or we shall lose our usual seats.

Ella is hot, flurried and a little cross, and I reluctantly suggest giving up the service. But one of her favourite anthems is to be sung, and she will not hear of staying away.

So we rush through the cool, dark cloister, and the old verger bows and smiles us into the stalls; and then we find that, after all, there are a few minutes to spare, and Ella smoothes her ruffled features, and becomes interested in watching the incoming congregation.

Just before the choir and the Dean make their appearance, there enters a solitary gentleman — tall, thin, middle-aged — whom the verger proceeds to induct to one of the vacant seats immediately opposite ours. Ella looks up and gives my arm a little monitory pinch. She has had a Thackeray fever upon her just lately—Ella is the reader par excellence of our family—and I am not surprised when she whispers excitedly: "Colonel Newcome in flesh and blood! Isn't it wonderful?"

But as I look again, I hardly give my little sister credit for her usual discernment. The stranger is too young, and too distinctly a soldier of modern times, to be identified with the dear old Anglo-Indian colonel.

He may be forty-five, but scarcely looks so much, though his long moustache and close-cropped hair are abundantly grizzled; and his face, thin, aquiline and regular-featured, is brown with exposure to fiercer suns than are ever felt on European shores. But the service begins, and I try to give my whole attention to my devotions, and steadily resist the temptation to study my opposite neighbour until my thumb and Ella's are touching each other under the anthem-book.

Then I look across once more, and am startled to meet the steady gaze of a pair of keen, clear grey eyes fixed on my sister.

Ella's colour deepens under the scrutiny of which she speedily becomes aware. Then she suddenly looks across full at the stranger, a bright ray of inspiration illumines her lovely face, and as we sit down she whispers eagerly: "The man whose photo is on papa's mantelpiece! I knew I had seen him somewhere!"

Twenty minutes later, we are standing in the cloister, talking to our newly-found acquaintance as if we had only parted yesterday.

For Sir Francis Ferrars is one of our father's dearest friends, and though we have not met for ten years, even Ella, as soon as she hears his voice, has some shadowy recollection of the good-natured soldier who used to patronise her in the old days of childhood.

He has only just arrived in England after ten years of absence: nine of which have been spent in India. For the last few months his name has been prominent among our heroes of the Soudan, and as I look into his face I see that it wears the worn look of suffering—nay, of bitter disappointment—that I have seen on the faces of many who risked their lives—alas! in vain—to save that of England's last and greatest martyr.

Sir Francis grasps my hand with friendly warmth, and asserts that

he well remembers his little friend Gracie; but he looks long and searchingly into Ella's dark eyes, as if in them he found again some treasure unseen for many a long year.

The colour mantles in her sweet face, as at last he turns away, murmuring: "How like—how very like you are to your sister! I could fancy it was the same face—only ——"

"Which?" demands Ella, in her pretty peremptory fashion. "Like Wordsworth's famous family, 'we are seven,' and I don't know to which of my four sisters you may be alluding."

"The eldest—Miss Trevelyan—Janet. When I left England she was the exact image of what you are now."

"Janet!" The bare notion that our staid, prim, somewhat severe elder sister could ever have possessed Ella's cherub-like beauty is incomprehensible to us both.

Involuntarily we exchange glances of amazement. Sir Francis perceives his mistake, and moves hastily.

"Well, I must go—my things are at the Knight's Shield. I could not help running down the first fine day after we landed, for your father is my oldest and dearest friend, and ten years of exile have not cooled our friendship—on my side, at least.

"Nor on his," I answer, eagerly. "But don't go to the hotel; come home straight with us. The pony-cart holds four.

"Please do. Papa will be so over-joyed."

Sir Francis hesitates; meets Ella's pleading eyes, and consents, though it is no easy matter to curl up his long legs in the small back-seat which he insists on sharing with Thomas, our groom. In less than half an hour we are at our own door.

My father comes out hurriedly to see who our fourth passenger may be, and then there are joyful exclamations of "Frank! dear old boy, this is too delightful to be true!"

"Trevelyan, it does my heart good to see your face once more."

And in the hall, shaded and cool after the sunny glare, Janet meets us, and I see Sir Francis bend his stately head as he takes her outstretched hand, but I cannot hear the words of greeting.

A moment later, Janet is at her usual post, by the tea-table, and I, stealing a glance at her, observe that she is deeply flushed, and that the hands with which she moves the cups are trembling visibly.

It would seem that the arrival of his friend had awakened a new spring of life in my father. During the years that have elapsed since our mother's death, cares have sat heavily upon him, and the bringing up of seven bairns has been no small source of anxiety. Now he seems to have cast all troubles to the winds for the nonce and to be once more the genial, light-hearted squire of former days.

"You must take a shooting-box and settle near us, Frank," he cries, rubbing his hands. "There's Woodlands to be had—it is quite time your fighting days were over."

Sir Francis smiles, but avoids a direct answer; and soon that little witch Ella has decoyed him to her side again, and is carrying him off to be initiated into the mysteries of tennis.

Our young neighbour, Edgar Holt, has dropped in (no infrequent occurrence) and I am called to make up the set. As I pass through the open window, I cast a glance back at Janet, sitting alone by her empty tea-cups. A pang seizes me as I notice how thin and worn—yes, there is no disguising it—how *old* our sister looks.

The days go by, and still Sir Francis Ferrars lingers at Brookfield. Papa has from the first insisted on sending for his luggage; his future plans seems vague, and he stays on, basking in the beauty of the summer days and spending much of his time in sharing our girlish amusements, to the no small displeasure of Edgar Holt.

"What does an old buffer like that want with playing tennis?" he one day grumbles, but Ella flashes round upon him indignantly.

"Old! Sir Francis is only forty-two, and men who have served their country have some right to show traces of wear and tear." And Edgar subsides, snubbed, and is supremely wretched for the rest of the day.

Meanwhile, I am growing very uneasy, for I have discovered, or fancied that I have discovered, that our guest's presence is far from being a source of unmixed happiness to my eldest sister.

She is irritable, depressed, yet nervously anxious to make his visit a pleasant one. Nay, strange to say, it is she, and not my father, who suggests that we should do our share in entertaining the neighbourhood generally, and exhibiting our lion to the best advantage.

At last there comes a morning, hotter than all its predecessors, when even Ella has no energy to play tennis, ride, or go on the river, and she and I agree to spend our time quietly in a hammock we have privately slung for ourselves in the branches of the largest oak-tree in a remote quarter of the grounds.

We have been there about an hour, when we are roused by the sound of voices almost immediately below our nest.

He who hesitates is lost, and, while we are looking at each other in doubt as to the means of escape, the opportunity is gone, and we are compelled to become unwilling eaves-droppers or to descend with startling abruptness almost on the very heads of our eldest sister and Sir Francis Ferrars.

As Janet stands there, with the chequered sun-rays falling on her face and casting golden light on her hair, I, for the first time, realise that there may be some likeness to Ella. It seems as if I had never observed before how delicately beautiful is the outline of Janet's face, if the expression were less harassed and sad.

Involuntarily I glance at Ella. She has raised her head and is gazing fixedly down. As I make some slight movement, she catches my hand. "We can't," she whispers almost fiercely; "they don't see us—the yew-tree is between. We must see it out now."

"Janet!" Sir Francis's deep tones are speaking; and I get a glimpse of his face, and read in it a strange mixture of tenderness and resolution: "You cannot think that after ten years of patience I am to be put off like this. I accepted your decree of banishment then. You had a right to love your father better than me, and perhaps you could not, as you said, leave him and the six children so recently motherless. But now all is changed. Your task is amply, nobly fulfilled. Those very children have grown up to take your place."

"God help me! They have indeed."

It is the sob of a broken heart that interrupts him, and ere he can speak again, the torrent of pent suffering breaks forth.

"Do you take me for a fool? Do you think I am ignorant that I have grown old, and cross, and haggard, in these ten long years of wear and tear? You have kept your youth amid the stirring life you have led. A man is often young up to fifty. But at thirty-two, what am I but a soured, worn-out drudge? Ask the children, or"—with a bitter laugh—"look at Ella and me, side by side. I was like her once—in the old days when you were here."

"I know it." There is a deep, tender power in his voice, which seems at once to soothe and master her. "I know it, and it is this that has made the child's sweet face and ways so attractive to me." Involuntarily I glance at Ella; there are tears in her pretty eyes, but she makes a brave effort to keep them back. "But for me there is but one woman in the world, and that is the Janet Trevelyan to whom ten years ago, under this very tree, my love was plighted. I am changed, too, sweetheart; the years have not dealt with me so gently as you think—as these grey hairs testify—but my heart has never wavered in its truth to you."

She has turned from him, and is leaning her head against the rough bark of the tree. "Frank, Frank, do not tempt me," she cries in stifled accents; "you will repent when it is too late."

But for all answer, he draws her to him with his gentle, irresistible force, and for an instant we catch sight of a face so radiant, so transformed, that we look at each other in wonderment.

"Was it only happiness that was wanting?" Ella murmurs, as arm-in-arm, every obstacle now swept away, the lovers pass from under our tree. "Poor Janet; how selfish we have been to have ever thought her cross or cold!"

And somehow the words comfort me, for I begin to perceive that the wound in my little sister's heart is only skin-deep, and I can, with no unkindness to her, give my full sympathy where soon it is so warmly claimed.

For many things that have been mysteries to our childish minds are now made clear, and we are ready with open arms to meet the brother-in-law elect who seems to us as romantic as one of Arthur's knights in his unswerving constancy.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

By Sarah Doudney.

CHAPTER XI.

A CHRYSANTHEMUM.

WHEN the lessons had first begun, Harriet had made a point of carrying her work-basket upstairs and sitting in the room to listen, as she said, to the music. But this practice of hers was very soon discontinued. In the first place, Mr. Milton wanted his wife downstairs, and missed her companionship; and in the second place she knew that Mr. Vordenberg's interest was in Beatrice, not in herself. Moreover, this quiet man, so noble-looking and grave, might safely be trusted with his young pupil; and Mrs. Milton was quite sure that her presence was not needed at all.

"What was the song?" he asked, earnestly. "Do you mean the little English thing I was singing an hour or two ago?"

She answered him by singing those two haunting lines in rather an unsteady voice:

"Will it go, or will it stay?"
Who can say, ah, who can say?"

"I have sung many sadder songs," he said, "and they have not depressed you; indeed, you have asked for them again and again. There are opera-airs, full of heart-break and hopelessness, which you often like to hear. Why were you moved by that poor little ditty?"

"It is difficult to say." Her colour rose as she spoke, and her hands trifled nervously with a sheet of music.

He stood still for a second, watching her in silence. And as he looked at her, standing before him in all the perfect bloom and freshness of her early womanhood, his own face suddenly changed and the light vanished from his features. For him, who had already endured a sharper agony than falls to the lot of many men, there was now a new pang But he bore it calmly, silently, as he bore everything, and made no sign.

A man of slower perceptions would not have divined at once the meaning of that quick blush and girlish nervousness. But he read these slight tokens aright, and knew, by a sure instinct, why her young heart had been saddened by that song.

"I think I understand," he said, very quietly. "There are times when we cannot bear even the faintest hint of a doubt. When the heart is trembling over some newly-found joy, it always listens

anxiously for the first notes of warning. We are never so keenly alive to omens as when we are intensely happy."

Again her colour came and went softly, and her expression showed the emotion she felt at his words. It seemed to her that he must have an almost supernatural power of reading the thoughts.

"Mr. Vordenberg, are you a magician? How is it that you know so well what people think and feel?"

"Do you fancy that because I am grave and white-haired, I have never known youth and bliss? There is no love-throb that I have not felt; no glorious hope that has not been familiar to me. Is it any wonder that I know the signs of love in another, and comprehend every fear that clouds the rapture of a rejoicing heart?"

He looked at her with such tender gentleness in his gaze that she felt a great longing to tell him all that was in her mind—all the foolish doubts and anxieties that she had not wholly confided to Harriet. And yet, how could she put such vague things into words?

"Other people do not comprehend so quickly," she said, with a little sigh.

"Very few have had an experience like mine," he answered. "Confide in me if you will, Miss Ward. I have an idea the day may come when my friendship may be of use to you. This is only a dreamy notion, perhaps, yet it may be a true one."

"I shall be glad to tell you something if you care to listen!" She lifted her deep blue eyes to his with such a trusting glance that he was smitten with a sharp pain. How plain it was that she could not look at him so frankly if her heart had not been fully pre-occupied! A woman who was heart-free would have found out his secret and have been abashed and reserved. But Beatrice, absorbed in her own feelings, was quite blind to his.

"I do, indeed, care to listen. Say on."

"Well, then, your song seemed to strike me with a sense of fear, just because I have been so very happy to-day. I am entering on a new path and I wish I had not heard that haunting refrain!"

"Do not let it trouble you," he said, earnestly. "That melody was an air sung by Spanish gipsies under the walls of the Alhambra; but the words that accompanied it were so vapid and meaningless, that I substituted others. They are mere commonplace lines, jotted down in an idle moment, and not worthy of a serious thought. And now tell me if I may be your friend, and if you will really trust me now, and always?"

"I will trust you from the bottom of my heart, and be grateful for your friendship."

"That is well" He drew a long breath, and began to turn over a pile of music. "I will sing you something joyous and triumphant, something that will silence the echoes of that foolish song. But there is another thing I want to know. A friend has a right to ask a

few questions, has he not? I will not presume too far upon my privilege."

"I am sure you will not ask any question that I shall not willingly answer, Mr. Vordenberg."

Already he had comforted and reassured her, and there was evident gladness in her voice and eyes.

"Well, I should like to hear his name," he continued, still busy with the music. "The name of the man whom you have made happy to-day; what is it?"

She had a little difficulty in uttering it, and it came rather slowly from those ripe, red lips of hers.

"It is Godwin Earle."

"Thank you," he said frankly. "I shall remember that name. Someday you must let me see him and know him; I am prepared to like him for your sake. Ah, here, at last, is the song I have been searching for! Listen to this. It is a true bridal hymn."

He did not touch the harp again, but went to the piano, and played a few full-sounding chords. And then his voice rang out, richer and stronger than she had ever heard it yet. She did not guess that he was singing a dirge for his own dead hopes; but there is seldom a bridal melody that is not somebody's wail! And the joy and power of the music filled her like strong wine, and set her beyond the reach of vague fears. Vordenberg had truly said that he would silence the echoes of the former song.

"That was magnificent!" she cried, when the strain ceased. "But don't ask me to sing to-night; I could not bear the sound of my own poor little voice after anything so grand! How shall I ever thank you enough for the strength you have given me?"

"I do not want thanks," he replied, as he rose from the piano, and stood quietly fronting her once more. "All I desire is your entire confidence. If any difficulties arise in your path—if any troubles gather round *him*—then remember me. Once more I offer you my fullest service—now, and in the time to come."

His voice trembled slightly, and his face was very pale; there was a moisture in the brilliant eyes that told of genuine feeling. Beatrice was deeply moved. Her words came falteringly, and her tears were ready to fall.

"I shall always feel my gratitude, even if I do not speak it," she said, toying unconsciously with some white chrysanthemums in the front of her dress. "And *he* will feel it too. Already I have told him all about you."

"That 'all' must be very little," he replied, smiling.

"I think it is a great deal. It seems as if I had known you for years, Mr. Vordenberg."

She smiled brightly as she held out her hand and said good-night. Another moment and he was standing alone in the room.

Alone, indeed! The hope which he had been cherishing, half un-

consciously, for weeks, had put out fibres, ivy-like, that were clinging firmly to his heart. One strong wrench, and the beautiful growing thing was torn away for ever, leaving an unsightly blank behind.

"Stavieski was right," he thought. "He told me that I had nothing more to do with the sweets of life. I must have been mad to fancy, even for a moment, that she was meant for me. I am white-haired; I have no longer the power of winning a woman's love; it was a dream; only a dream!"

His glance suddenly fell on something white lying on the carpet at his feet. It was one of the chrysanthemums that she had worn upon her bosom, and he picked it up and touched it with his lips.

There is something in the fresh, pungent smell of the flower that has, on certain minds, an invigorating influence. It recalls none of the rich odours of the vanished summer; it conjures up no vision of warm groves and sapphire skies. It is a winter blossom, hardy, wholesome, fragrant, with that peculiar scent which seems to be strongest in desolation and decay. And to Vordenberg, it conveyed, in that dreary moment, a subtle strength and indescribable comfort. The rose was for another hand; but he was not left uncheered in the winter of his life. Love was denied him; but the friendship of a fresh, pure girl's heart was not a thing to be lightly thrown aside.

He locked up the chrysanthemum among certain hoarded treasures that belonged to the past; and faced his lonely life with the quiet courage that had carried him through many a mournful year. But something seemed to say to him that Beatrice would yet have need of his aid, even if she had no need of his love.

He was still calm, and still outwardly cheerful, when he saw Miss Ward on the following day. She was a lovely vision of freshness in the gray morning, wrapped up comfortably in furs, with bright hair curling in little rings under a sealskin cap. For some seconds, she stood talking with Mrs. Milton in the hall, not noticing Mr. Vordenberg standing in the shadow on the stairs. He watched her intently, admiring her tall figure, so erect, and straight, and pliant with youthful grace. She turned half round towards him, and he caught sight of a roll of music in her hand.

"Wish me joy of my first dinner-party, Harriet," he heard her say. "I would rather spend the evening quietly at home; but one must forget self for Mrs. Wyville's sake. She has been so kind, you know, and she has set her heart on introducing me to this Madame Somebody."

"She has been kind," Harriet responded. "But there is no need for you to be mixed up with Madame Somebody. Mrs. Wyville is always gushing over foreign friends. And I can't think why she wants to keep you for a whole day and night."

"I can understand her reasons. She needs Nurse's help in household matters, and the children must be left to my care. Madame

Somebody will arrive in the afternoon; she is to stay with Mrs. Wyville till she can find suitable apartments. By the way, Harriet, what about the drawing-rooms, which are empty and which you do not use? Why not take pity upon Madame and let her come here? I daresay she will be nice."

"We shall see," rejoined Harriet. "It is very likely you will find her settling permanently in Bruton Street. Mrs. Wyville is always asking people to live with her. She would keep you there for ever if she could. Ah, Mr. Vordenberg, good-morning."

"Good-morning," repeated Miss Ward, brightly. "I hope I shall do you justice to-night, Mr. Vordenberg. I am going to sing some of the songs you have taught me, and I mean to do my very best."

"You are sure to succeed in charming everybody," he said, speaking more gaily than usual. She gave him a parting smile, opened the door, and tripped off lightly into the December mist.

It was only a thin mist that hung its light veil over London that day, not a fog that blinds and suffocates, but a haze through which even a winter sun may shine. The pavement was dry; the streets were full of brisk walkers, bustling along with a festive air about them; the shop-windows were gorgeous to behold, and provoked screams of rapture from excited children. Beatrice, taking her way through Bond Street in her new character of an engaged young woman, was decidedly on good terms with herself and all the world.

Mr. Vordenberg had banished those indefinite fears which had so swiftly followed her first thrill of joy. Seen by the morning light, this joy now looked so substantial and satisfactory a thing, that she was inclined to scoff at her own misgivings. Godwin and herself, shorn of all glamour and romance, were just two everyday individuals who had taken a sober liking to each other and a sensible resolution to spend their lives together. Beatrice quite gloried in this view of the case, and began to assume little old-fashioned, matronly airs, unconsciously copied from Harriet.

She glanced, with a new and lively interest, at those butchers' and poulterers' shops which she had once passed with the utmost indifference. Godwin would expect her to be deeply versed in all the lore of marketing; and a woman who did not understand the difference between a chop and a cutlet would be sure to sink several degrees in his estimation. It would be dreadful, too, not to know whether ducks were dearer than fowls; Beatrice gave a little shudder at her own ignorance, and resolved to go through a severe training before she was many weeks older.

As to the jewellers' windows, she was in no mood for looking at any of their vanities to-day. She had pictured Godwin and herself as a young couple of modest means, with little to spend on self-adornment. And yet, it must be confessed that she halted, with a strange thrill, before a certain tray of plain gold rings. She meant

to have a substantial one when the time came for wearing it. It would be too distressing to find yourself an old woman with only a thin, thread-like circlet on the third finger of your left hand.

As she turned into Bruton Street, she wondered, oh, foolish Beatrice! whether Mrs. Wyville would detect any subtle change in her look and manner? But the widow, at no time a keen observer, was now fully occupied with thoughts of her dinner-party and the arrival of her expected guest. Very little teaching was got through that morning; the mother had so many important things to say to Miss Ward, that Lily and Daisy shut their books and gave three cheers for a holiday.

"Did I ever tell you how I first met Madame Valerot, Beatrice?" she said, when the last cheer had died away, and the children, being quite breathless, were reduced to silence. "It was when I was staying with my sister-in-law in Paris; Marie knows the most delightful people, and always gives the most perfect entertainments. Well, one evening she introduced me to her last favourite, the young wife of an immensely rich financier, Monsieur Valerot. The husband was a man of seventy; the wife a lovely woman of two or three-and-twenty; and I knew, of course, that on her side there could be none of the right kind of love. However, such matches are made every day; and Pauline Valerot certainly behaved perfectly, not a breath of slander ever touched her name."

"I thought she was a widow," remarked Beatrice.

"She is as good as a widow now. They had not been married many months when her husband became hopelessly insane. The doctors would not let her live with him; and they put him into safe keeping, and left her a rich woman, alone in the world. Some people said that the relations who managed Monsieur Valerot's affairs, had allowed her only a very moderate income. But that I cannot believe. She must, I am sure, have ample means at her command; and she behaves beautifully, as she always did. Poor dear Pauline!"

"Have you known her long?" Beatrice asked.

"Oh, no. It was in the spring of this year that we met. She is one of those charming women who win your heart at once."

Beatrice thought that Mrs. Wyville was very easily won.

"We have kept up a correspondence," the widow went on. "Pauline's letters are as charming as herself. It was a great surprise and pleasure to hear that she was coming to London. Of course I begged her to stay here; and I should be only too glad if she would share my home."

"You cannot persuade her to live with you?"

"No; I wish I could. But she says that trouble has made her quite morbid at times. Her nerves are out of order, and she wants to take quiet apartments and put herself under a doctor's care. These noisy children would be too much for her."

Here Daisy promptly announced her intention of being too much

or anybody who didn't like noise! And while Beatrice was reproving her, Mrs. Wyville glided away.

Most of the afternoon was spent in the nursery; Miss Ward was more disposed to play with the children than to talk to their mother that day. She could re-arrange all the furniture in the dolls' house and respond to their gay chatter while her thoughts were elsewhere. And her proposal of a dolls' tea-fight was received with loud acclamations.

It was past four o'clock, and the tea-drinking was going on merrily, when a cab stopped before the house. A few seconds later there was a sound of heavy feet upon the stairs, and a bumping against the stairs. Madame Valerot had arrived, and her boxes were being carried up to her room.

At half-past six the children were prepared for bed; and Beatrice, dressed for dinner, was sitting in the night-nursery with nurse, and listening attentively to Daisy's prayers. Daisy, in her white night-gown, her little face framed in her bright hair, and her hands devoutly clasped, might have served as an artist's model for a child just ready to go to heaven. It was difficult to believe that it was a very earthly little spirit which animated that small, saintly countenance; but nurse and Beatrice knew her well, and were not to be deceived by appearances for a moment.

Her petitions ended, she was laid in her little white nest, smiling with a serene consciousness of duty well performed. Beatrice had derived much enjoyment from these religious exercises, and was carefully tucking up her pupil, when the door softly opened.

"I thought I should find you here," said Mrs. Wyville, entering. "They are not asleep yet, I suppose? Come, Pauline, and peep at them. Let me introduce Miss Ward—Madame Valerot."

She had the most mobile face that Beatrice had ever seen. Large dark brown eyes, wonderfully soft and pleading; a clear skin, tinted with the bloom of a peach; and bright auburn hair, cut short. Her features were small and perfectly regular; she was rather below middle height, and her figure was, perhaps, a little too full. But no critic could find fault with anything about a woman possessed of so many charms.

Her dress was as perfect as her face; a black velvet gown sparingly trimmed with rich old lace. It seemed almost a pity to decorate such a fine throat and bust as hers, but she glittered with emeralds and diamonds. They flashed in the shape of a necklace, with pendants resting on her bosom, and sparkled in the bracelets on her plump, dimpled arms. They were too dazzling, too splendid for a quiet dinner, and Beatrice felt that her beauty would have been more admirable without them.

She had the sunniest of her many smiles for the children. But Miss Ward had quick instincts, and she saw that the smile was called up for the occasion. Madame Valerot's real interests centred in

men and women. She was attracted by Beatrice, and set about the task of winning her at once.

And her voice was so musical, her manner so confiding and sweet, that one must indeed have had an ungracious nature to have withstood the spell. Beatrice felt herself soothed, and petted, and caressed by Madame Valerot's look and tone, and yet her words had been only such ordinary sentences as one new acquaintance would naturally speak to another.

The guests arrived: a clever barrister and his wife; a fashionable doctor; a rising literary man; and a popular curate. Beatrice was allotted to the last, and very speedily came to the conclusion that he must be at his best in the pulpit. He bored her all the more because he admired her very much indeed. And good-natured Mrs. Wyville (who knew nothing of the engagement) had invited him on purpose that he might fall in love with her governess.

But Beatrice, desperately exerting herself to be agreeable, was wearying all the while for the cosy parlour at home, and wondering what Godwin was doing with himself. Old acquaintances had begun to look him up again, and he no longer repelled their advances. His love for Beatrice had put him on good terms with the world, and she had ceased to dread any return of his morbid mood. He was dining out this evening, she believed, he had said something about the return of some Indian friend. And she only hoped that he was enjoying himself more than she was!

At last the dinner came to an end. It had gone off very well, indeed; and Madame Valerot's grace and sweetness had so captivated the literary man, that he meant to make her the heroine of his next novel. The ladies passed through the curtained arch which divided the dining-room from the drawing-room, and Beatrice was presently desired to take her place at the piano.

The men were attracted by the very first notes of that pure, fresh voice. The curate turned out to be musical, and began to burn to distinguish himself, the barrister's wife played well, and these two engrossed a good deal of Miss Ward's attention. Madame Valerot neither played nor sang; and the literary man had established himself by her side in a quiet corner. She sat in a low chair, holding a handscreen between her face and the fire, and looking up at him with those innocent brown eyes that had, at times, quite a child-like expression.

At length Beatrice, being over-pressed by the curate, began to tax her memory for songs unsung. And at last there came into her head a simple little air which Vordenberg had taught her. It was plaintive and sweet; even the novelist listened and was charmed; and the barrister's keen face softened and seemed to look younger under the spell of the melody. But Madame Valerot was more deeply moved than any of the others, and it was easy to see that her emotion was quite genuine.

When the song came to an end, Beatrice turned, and found those lovely eyes looking her through and through. The rich bloom had faded from the perfect face that was bending close to hers, and it was a changed voice, sharp and eager, that said quickly :

"Where did you learn that air, Miss Ward ?"

"From my master," Beatrice answered, surprised at the tone and look of the questioner. "It is very easy ; any one could learn it."

"It is taken from some opera, I suppose ?" said the novelist, who had followed Madame Valerot to the piano. "But I don't remember ——"

"No, no, no," cried the auburn-haired woman, impulsively. "It is not taken from any opera ! It is an old Polish melody ; and the words that you have sung are not the right words," she added to Beatrice.

"Very likely not," Miss Ward said, quietly. "I have never seen the music written, and I did not know that it was Polish."

"Why, Pauline, I never thought you cared much for music," said Mrs. Wyville, coming up and laying a hand on her friend's shoulder.

Madame Valerot recovered herself, and smiled sweetly, although her face was very pale.

"Certain airs always affect me strangely," she replied, with her pretty foreign accent. "And no one can help being touched by Miss Ward's singing."

The compliment was graceful enough, but Beatrice did not believe that her voice alone could have stirred up Madame Valerot's feelings. Some other influences must have been at work ; old memories had been awakened, and Madame did not care to own the truth. Was there just a suspicion of mystery attached to this beautiful woman with the innocent brown eyes? Beatrice looked at her with a new interest, and wondered if that child-like face had its own unwritten story ?

The Polish air was the last song of the evening. Madame Valerot made an effort to rouse herself after the guests were gone, and began a confidential talk with Beatrice. Mrs. Wyville had said that Mrs. Milton had some drawing-rooms unoccupied. Would Miss Ward describe them ?

"I think they may suit me very well," said Madame, with a little sigh of weariness. "I want rest and perfect retirement. My health has failed lately, and I should like to be in a quiet house—just such a house as Mrs. Milton's. I will call to-morrow."

She looked so pale and tired when she said good-night, that Beatrice believed in the failing health and the desire for rest. Certainly, there was a fascination about this woman's pleading looks and gentle tones. She appealed to your sympathy at once, and seldom failed to get the very thing that she wanted.

After breakfast next morning, Beatrice hastened back to Wimpole Street, anxious to tell Harriet all about the possible lodger. But Harriet was in one of her mistrustful moods, and said she could never abide foreign women with short auburn hair.

"I don't believe her hair is dyed," said Beatrice.

"How can you tell? And if it is not dyed, so much the worse. Auburn hair always denotes a treacherous nature."

"Well, I hope she will come here," persisted Beatrice. "If she does, we shall have two interesting foreigners in the house. Madame Valerot and Mr. Vordenberg—what a charming pair!"

CHAPTER XII.

MADAME VALEROT.

While Godwin and Beatrice were out for a Saturday afternoon walk, Madame Valerot came to Wimpole Street. And despite her prejudices, Harriet found her attractive, and gladly agreed to receive her into her house.

She arrived punctually at eight o'clock, on that same Saturday night. The lovers, entirely occupied with each other, did not give her a thought. Vordenberg, in his quiet rooms upstairs, was busy with his own devices, and never troubled himself about the occupants of the lower apartments.

The delicate little woman was strong enough to unpack all her belongings with her own hands. She had a great many pretty trifles and knick-knacks to arrange about the rooms; but the object of her especial care was a heavy, brass-bound desk, which she placed on a small table near the fire. Then there were a goodly number of gowns to be unfolded, shaken out, and hung upon pegs in the wardrobe; and when all was done, she rang for coffee, and settled herself in the corner of a comfortable sofa.

"I must have some more cushions," she thought, trying to make a nest in her corner. "I will order a dozen sofa pillows on Monday; and I don't think I can exist without a rocking chair—it quiets one's nerves. Without my little luxuries I am nothing."

The maid who answered the bell was struck with the soft, half-childish beauty of the new-comer. Madame's little auburn head and innocent dark eyes appealed at once to one's sense of protection. She drank her coffee, and went early to bed.

The drawing-room windows were provided with small balconies, always filled with flowers in summer and cheerful with evergreens all through the winter months. On Sunday afternoon, Madame, well pleased with these new quarters, went to sit at one of the windows.

She was a devout Catholic, and had been to chapel in the morning, wrapped up in rich furs, a wintry vision of loveliness. Everyone had admired her; plenty of women had envied her dress; plenty of men

had looked approvingly at the soft round face in the Paris bonnet. A pretty women is welcome all the year round; but doubly so in winter, when flowers are scarce, and bright eyes and glowing cheeks make amends for their absence.

If anyone had chanced to look up at one of those balcony windows, he would have seen a flower-like face with dark eyes gazing wistfully down into the street below.

Madame was young, and she sighed and looked a little enviously at the Sunday couples, walking along in holiday garb, and enjoying the winter sunbeams. She had made up her mind to have a great deal of pleasure in her life, but somehow she had not got all that she had expected. It was dull work, sitting here and watching other people having good times; and she was just going to leave the window, when the street-door was heard suddenly to close.

She felt a languid curiosity in the other occupants of the house. Were any of them going out? Yes; a slim, well-dressed man and a tall girl emerged from the door and crossed the street side by side. She knew the girl at a glance; the plain cloth jacket, trimmed with fur that was not of the costliest description, fitted the graceful figure perfectly; and glimpses of sunny hair were seen under a little black velvet bonnet. It was Beatrice Ward, whose fresh, white-rose face had won Madame's half-unwilling admiration on the evening of their first meeting. But who was her companion?

The man chanced to raise his head, and look up, as it seemed, to the very window at which the new lodger was sitting. With an irrepressible cry, Madame started back, and hid herself behind the curtain, crouching down into her chair in a perfect agony of fear. For some seconds she did not move; and when, at last, she rose, and went over to a couch by the fire, her face was deadly white and her hands were damp and cold.

"It was only a chance resemblance," she said, over and over again. "I am getting fearfully nervous; how can I be fit for any work if I start at every shadow? And yet life is full of strange meetings, and all one's plans may be upset in a moment by some unfortunate encounter."

She bent over the fire, chafing her cold hands, and shivering from head to foot. And then, happening to catch sight of her face in a little mirror that hung between the windows, this strange woman suddenly took heart. The colour returned to her lips; her eyes lost their scared expression; she rose, and went up close to the glass and deliberately surveyed herself.

"Even if he saw me, he would never know me!" she murmured; and a faint smile of satisfaction hovered round the beautiful mouth. "The features are the same, of course. But hair, complexion and figure—all have utterly changed. And he scarcely looked at me in those days. His head was full of his troubles, and of that stiff, cold-

hearted girl he used to be so fond of! Well for him if he has taken a new love in her place!"

She drew a long breath of relief, and went on murmuring to herself.

"I was sallow and thin at that time, and my hair was a great deal darker than it is now. I used to like to look as stupid and unattractive as possible; attractiveness would have done me no good then! I was unhappy, too. It would have been impossible to have gone on living such a life."

Again she sighed heavily, as if some burden had just been lifted from her spirit. Slowly the soft flush came back into her rounded cheeks; and she returned to the sofa, and made herself a nest of cushions.

"If he were to meet me face to face, he would not recognise me!" she went on. "I must rest, and get over the shock, and prepare myself for any future surprises. I knew that there was some risk in coming back to England."

She curled herself upon the couch, still shivering a little, and half closed her eyes. The warmth of the fire was pleasant, and presently the shivering ceased altogether, and she lay still.

The house was very quiet; there were no footsteps on the stairs, no sounds in the hall below, and the silence soothed Madame Valerot's quivering nerves and calmed her fears. But presently, from a room not far off, came the sweet music of harp-strings, that died away into the most tender cadence and then burst out softly again. Pauline Valerot had no musical powers; yet, as she had herself confessed, she could be strangely moved by certain kinds of melody.

As she listened, the tears trembled on her long dark lashes, and all that she had ever known of true peace came back to her heart. Vague childish memories, faint recollections of vanished faces and silent voices, began to flit through her brain. All the worry and agitation of the past few days was softly stilled, and the tired spirit drank in deep draughts of rest. Poor Pauline! It was long, indeed, since she had tasted the blessing of repose.

There had been no comfort in the few months of her loveless marriage, although she had been admired and caressed, and loaded with those jewels for which she had sold herself, body and soul. Jewels! Even in her loneliest hours, she loved to look at them and deck herself with them. Their glitter was the only light that shone upon her dark path; and yet some inward voice whispered that it was an evil splendour, and had led many women to destruction.

But now, while she listened to those harp-notes, even the jewels were forgotten. And forgotten, too, was the journey from Paris, and the wearisome kindness of her friend in Bruton Street. She was glad to take refuge in this quiet house, where people seemed to move and speak softly. And this music—this wonderful music, was gently

wafting her soul away to a world of peaceful dreams and tranquil remembrance.

So she slept, soundly and sweetly, and did not wake till there was a light knock at her door. But it was only Mary, the neat housemaid, bringing up the four o'clock tea that she had ordered.

Madame Valerot sat up sleepily on the couch, and passed two plump, white hands, loaded with rings, over her auburn head. The sparkle of the gems almost dazzled Mary; and Madame's soft round face and short-cut hair gave her such a sweet look of childish innocence, that the maid was quite fascinated. As a rule, Mrs. Milton's servants objected to being questioned, but when this lovely French lady made a few simple enquiries, they were most willingly and readily answered.

"Was it Mr. Milton who went out with Miss Ward about an hour ago?" she said, artlessly.

"Oh, no, madame; that was Mr. Earle," replied Mary, stealing another glance at the flashing rings.

"Ah, Mr. Earle." Pauline's hand went up to her brow for an instant. "Is he living here?"

"No, madame; he is a friend who visits Miss Ward, and my master and mistress."

Madame Valerot breathed more freely. This man whom she feared was not under the same roof with her; he was only a caller.

"There was music, beautiful music, upstairs," she said, smiling sweetly at Mary. "Who is it that plays so well?"

Mr. Vordenberg, madame. The gentleman who lives on the second-floor."

Pauline smiled again, and was silent. She knew all about her fellow-lodgers now, she said to herself. The elderly lady who occupied the dining-room was an acquaintance of Mrs. Wyville's, and a person of no importance as far as Madame was concerned. For a moment or two, she had thought that it would be wise to seek new quarters, but a little reflection decided her to stay.

"I am not expected to be friendly with the pretty governess," she mused. "And if I don't begin any intimacy with her, I shall, of course, see nothing of her lover. He was an ill-starred man, that poor Earle; but it seems that better days have come to him. The girl Beatrice is reserved and proud; she does not want to know more of me. That is well. We two will keep apart. And now I will fling off all my fears and think only of the work I have to do."

Days passed away, and Christmas came; the first Christmas that Beatrice had ever spent in London. Mr. Corder had invited the Miltons and the lovers to dine with him on Christmas evening. But happy as she was, Beatrice could not help thinking a great deal about Mr. Vordenberg, and her heart often ached for his sake.

"He is so lonely," she said to Godwin; "and lately he has looked sadder than ever. It would be only a mockery to wish him a merry

Christmas. But I should like to say a cheery word to him, and carry him some of the flowers you gave me."

They had just returned from one of their afternoon walks. And Godwin, looking into the sweet eyes of his betrothed, was in no mood to deny her anything.

"Give him some flowers, dear, by all means," he answered, with easy good-nature. "And run up and see him at once, before tea."

"I wish you would come with me," she said, laying a little hand coaxingly on his. "You know that I promised he should see you. Do come, Godwin."

So the two went upstairs together; and Beatrice presented her gift of flowers and introduced her lover. Vordenberg greeted Earle with that quiet grace and stateliness which never failed to make an impression on those who met him. And Godwin—who was no bad judge of men and manners—could see at once that he was no ordinary man.

"There's something quite princely about him," Earle said afterwards to Beatrice. "What perfect breeding! I wonder what his history really is?"

"Harriet is always trying to persuade me that he has no history," Beatrice remarked. "She thinks I'm too fond of making up romances about the people who take my fancy. But anyhow he is one of the loneliest beings in the world, and I like to think that the sight of us has done him good."

"The sight of you would do anybody good!" Godwin declared. And then he so far forgot the propriety required of him by Harriet, that he kissed Beatrice on the landing, just outside the drawing-room door.

As the weeks went on, Mrs. Milton observed that although Madame Valerot received few visitors, she went out a great deal. At home she seemed to be generally engaged in writing letters, and nearly always posted them with her own hands. Certainly, she was one of the quietest and best of lodgers, giving little trouble, expressing the warmest approval of all domestic arrangements, and winning the devotion of the servants by her unvarying sweetness of manner.

She never once invited Beatrice to enter her room, and the girl was glad that the acquaintance was not to be kept up. If the two women chanced to meet in the hall or on the stairs, they exchanged a civil greeting and went their respective ways. But these meetings seldom took place. Madame had a latch-key, and glided in and out so very swiftly and quietly that somehow she was seldom to be seen.

The new year advanced; April came, and Harriet's little courtyard bloomed anew with spring flowers. Fashionable people were crowding into town again; a brilliant season was predicted; and all the old shows and gaieties were beginning once more. Beatrice was thinking how soon the Richmond meadows would be yellow with

buttercups, and looking forward to a long ramble in the fields with her lover. What a happy summer they were going to have this year!

One evening, when his day's work was done, Mr. Milton was walking up and down the little yard, reading the paper and smoking a cigar. The French window was open; just inside the sitting-room sat Beatrice, her lap full of violets; and Godwin, by her side, was holding a dish of water to receive the flowers. Harriet, with her account-books, had stationed herself at the table, and was reckoning away, quite undisturbed by the low voices of the young people. And high above walls and roofs could be seen the clear April sky, with scarcely a cloud upon its faintly-fading blue.

"Bless my soul!" cried Mr. Milton, suddenly stopping short in his walk.

They all started. It was so seldom that such an ejaculation escaped his lips that Harriet and Beatrice exchanged bewildered looks. Then the former laid down her pen, rose quickly, and hastened out into the yard to join him.

"Look here, my dear," he said, putting the *Standard* into her hand.

Harriet took the paper, and read aloud in rather an unsteady voice:

"If Beatrice Ward, only child of the late Captain Arthur Ward, of the Royal Oakshire Regiment (190th Foot) will communicate with Messrs. Blair and Bellenden, 17, Chancery Lane, she will hear of something to her advantage."

"Now what can be the meaning of this?" cried Mrs. Milton, looking round upon the three startled faces. "To my certain knowledge, Beatrice has not a relation in the world. Poor Mrs. Ward was a Trevor, and all her people are dead. And as to Captain Ward, her grandfather has said a hundred times that he was the last of his race!"

"Isn't there a mistake?" Beatrice asked. "Was there another Ward in papa's regiment?"

"With an only child named Beatrice? Hardly likely," said Godwin. "One of your father's old friends has probably a wish to find you. He must have made many friends, you know, in India."

"That is it, Earle," replied Mr. Milton, taking up the paper again. "And I daresay Messrs. Blair and Bellenden will have very little to say. There may be a small legacy to be paid, or something of that sort. Beatrice had better write to them to-day."

And Beatrice crowded her violets into the dish, got her desk, and wrote a letter which was duly approved by Harriet and Godwin. After the first little shock of surprise was past, they all made merry over the girl's great expectations, and conjured up wonderful visions of future wealth and magnificence. But the talk was mere fun; no one really believed that anything important was to come out of the

lawyer's advertisement. And no one supposed for a moment that any startling change was close at hand.

"It is only the unexpected that ever happens," says an old proverb. And little could the lovers foresee danger to their hopes in those few words in the newspaper.

The Wyvilles were taking Easter holidays; and on the afternoon of the next day, Harriet and Beatrice were at home together. Both were busy with needle-work, chatting cheerfully over their occupation, and enjoying the bright sunbeams that made their way through the French window. The room was sweet with flower-scents; Beatrice wore a little bunch of violets on the bosom of her dress, and looked as fresh and pure as any of those spring blossoms that gladdened the eyes out-of-doors. A loud double-knock, resounding through the house, interrupted the talk for a moment, and, before it could be resumed, the door was flung open.

"Mr. Redburn and Mr. Blair," announced the page.

Harriet rose with perfect self-possession. One glance at the yellow-visaged old man, with a loosened wrapper hanging round his neck, convinced her that he must be an Anglo-Indian. The lawyer, who followed him, shot a swift look at the tall girl, standing near the window, and was about to speak. But his client was before him.

"I am here in consequence of a letter received by my solicitors," he began, straightforwardly enough. "Captain Ward was a great friend of mine, and I am very anxious to see his daughter. My name is Redburn."

"This is Miss Ward," said Harriet.

The old coffee-planter stepped forward with an eager look into the girl's face. And no sooner did those deep-blue eyes meet his, than he gave a gruff murmur of satisfaction.

"Poor Ward's eyes," he said. "I should have known her without any introduction. My dear young lady, I have heard your father talk of you many times. Have you any remembrance of my name?"

"*I* have," replied Harriet quietly. "I remember a letter in which Captain Ward said he had saved your life in a tiger-hunt. Am I right?"

"Quite right." The old man was grateful for her ready tact and good memory. "And you are ——"

"Mrs. Milton now. But when Captain Ward knew me, I was Miss Stuart, his daughter's governess."

"Ah, I recollect hearing my friend speak of you! And your grandfather," he added, turning to Beatrice, "is he living still?"

"He died last May," she answered. "It was his wish that I should come to Mrs. Milton."

A long conversation followed, and letters and photographs were produced. Beatrice looked with misty eyes at a portrait of herself, taken when she was a child of twelve and wore her hair cut short, rippling in flossy rings over her head. Captain Ward had been so

well pleased with this picture, that he had sent for another copy of it to give his friend.

"I ought to have sought you out long ago, Beatrice," said Mr. Redburn, with genuine regret in his voice. "The truth is, I was always promising myself that I would leave India, and always lingering. So the time slipped away, and I've come home at last, a broken-down old man with only a year or two before him."

"But England will do wonders for you," declared Harriet cheerfully. "Do you mean to live in town, Mr. Redburn?"

"I haven't made up my mind yet," he replied, still studying Beatrice's face. "My old acquaintance, Colonel Lindrick, has offered me a home for the present. He has a pretty place in Fairbridge."

Fairbridge! The name of that old town sent the blood to Beatrice's cheeks. It was Godwin Earle's home; the scene of his bitter sorrow and humiliation. Mr. Redburn thought how pretty she was, and went on after a slight pause:

"Colonel Lindrick and his daughter are now in town. They came on purpose to meet me on my return. I hope to bring Miss Lindrick to call on Miss Ward. You will find a friend in her, Beatrice."

Some strange foreboding chilled the girl's heart at these words. She smiled rather coldly, and murmured something about being happy to make Miss Lindrick's acquaintance.

Her spirits did not rally after Mr. Redburn's departure. In spite of Harriet's pleasant predictions, she could not believe that anything good was to come out of this visit. As to new friends, what did she want with them? To one who is very happy, any change seems unwelcome.

She met Godwin that evening with a graver face than usual, and half hoped that he would not think it necessary for her to respond very cordially to Mr. Redburn's advances. It was Harriet who told him the story, with much animation and many comments, and he listened with the deepest interest.

"I know Redburn by name," he said at last. "I used to hear men speak of him in India. He is a good old fellow, I believe, and was very well liked everywhere."

"He has not settled on a home yet," Harriet continued. "He is going to Fairbridge to stay with a Colonel Somebody—Lindrick—that is the name. And he means to bring Miss Lindrick to call on Beatrice."

A slight flush rose to Godwin's face, and passed away as quickly as it came. Beatrice, who was watching him earnestly, wondered that he was so little moved. A few moments later, Harriet left them alone, and he came to the girl's side and took her hand in his.

"I wonder what you will think of Alma Lindrick?" he said, looking frankly down at his betrothed's sweet face. "Beatrice, she was my first love; the very girl you noticed at the theatre!"

"I don't expect to like her much," replied Miss Ward, with charm-

ing candour. "And, really, I don't quite see why I am compelled to receive Mr. Redburn and any acquaintances he may force upon me!"

"'Thy father's friend forget not,'" said Godwin, kissing the lips that were inclined to pout. "Learn to be more a woman of the world, my child, and make the most of every advantage. This old man means to do you some kindness. Why are you not grateful?"

"Because I am not a woman of the world, I suppose; that's the reason why."

"I see you don't want to know Miss Lindrick," he said softly; "and honestly, I don't fancy that you two women will ever get on together. Even if you were cast upon a desert island, side by side, you would never become friends."

"There is no need for us to become friends, is there, Godwin?" she asked, looking up at him.

"Not friends; but I am afraid you must make up your mind to receive her as an acquaintance. It would be wrong, dear, to snub anyone who is introduced to you by Mr. Redburn."

"But Mr. Redburn is not my guardian. He has no control over me."

"No; but he comes to you as your father's old friend, ready to love you for that father's sake. If Captain Ward had lived, he would have demanded consideration for his friend, would he not?"

"Yes," admitted Beatrice, reluctantly.

"You know, from his letters, how greatly he esteemed Mr. Redburn. Is it not your duty to act as you would have acted had your father been alive? I am sure your own heart must tell you that it is."

"My conscience speaks plainly enough," said Beatrice, with a smile that came unwillingly. "It says that I ought to look upon Mr. Redburn as a sort of uncle or godfather sent me by providence! And instead of entertaining an unchristian prejudice against Miss Lindrick, I ought to ——"

The sentence was never finished. Godwin stopped her lips with half-a-dozen kisses; and then began to laugh at the curious fatality that was bringing his first love and his second love together.

"Why do you laugh?" demanded Beatrice. "Seriously, Godwin, I have a feeling that it would have been better for us if Mr. Redburn had stayed in India. And as to old loves and new loves, I think they do well to keep apart. I'm not jealous; I know you love me best of all, and I am thoroughly convinced that I'm a nicer girl than she ever was! But the simple truth is, that I don't like anything which brings a change into this happy life of ours."

"There will be no change," he hastened to say.

"That's what you can't tell. Mr. Redburn actually assumed an air of proprietorship at our first meeting. He will be insufferable if he goes on and pretends that he has got to manage my life for me."

CHAPTER XIII.

FAIRBRIDGE.

Two days after Mr. Redburn's visit, Madame Valerot was going out walking on a sunny afternoon. She was half-way downstairs when there was a knock at the hall-door, instantly answered by William, who chanced to be close at hand. And at the first glimpse of the lady in a fresh spring costume, who came sweeping in, Pauline beat a hasty retreat.

"What brings Alma Lindrick to this house?" she asked herself, when she had gained the shelter of her room again. "And why am I so nearly brought face to face with the people I want to avoid? Godwin Earle is a fool. He ought to have kept that Lindrick woman away from his new sweetheart. Pretty, fresh, graceful Beatrice, how Alma, the faded, will hate you!"

Meanwhile "Alma the faded" was sitting with Beatrice downstairs, and quietly criticising her while she made friendly overtures. On a close inspection, Beatrice proved to be even prettier than she had seemed at first sight, and Miss Lindrick was more envious than she cared to admit to herself.

Why should so many good things fall to the lot of this girl, she wondered bitterly? Old Redburn had taken her into his heart at their first meeting, and made no secret of his intention to provide for her future in the handsomest way. And now, sorely against her inclinations, here was Alma herself constrained to be civil to her, and compelled to admire her in spite of a strong desire to depreciate her charms! Colonel Lindrick had been very positive in his commands to his daughter, and Alma understood the necessity of playing into her father's hands. The Colonel wanted money very badly; Mr. Redburn had enough and to spare. It was politic, therefore, to humour the old coffee-planter in all his whims, and show every attention to his future heiress.

"I hope we shall know a great deal of each other," said Alma, sweetly. "My father's health is not very good, and we have decided to go home next week. Mr. Redburn will return with us, and make a long visit: his doctor says he must go to a sheltered spot. Have you ever been to Fairbridge?"

"No," Beatrice replied; "but I have heard that it is very pretty."

"It is pretty, and the air is so mild that it is sure to suit Mr. Redburn. We shall be so glad if you will promise to come and stay with us, Miss Ward."

"You are very kind," said Beatrice, with a strange sinking of the heart. She knew that she should have to accept the invitation. She was convinced that Harriet, and Mr. Milton, and Godwin—yes, Godwin—would all insist upon her going to Fairbridge.

But she did not want to go. The thought of the visit was so dreadful to her, that she longed to burst out crying like a child, and tell Miss Lindrick to go away. It was in vain that she scolded herself for this senseless reluctance to accept the Lindricks' civility. She felt like a condemned criminal when she told Alma that she should be "very happy to come."

But this appalling falsehood was uttered in so sweet a voice, and was accompanied by so gentle a glance from the deep-blue eyes, that Alma could find no fault in the girl's manner. Ashamed of her secret ingratitude, Beatrice tried to atone for it by being as well-behaved as possible. She even pressed Miss Lindrick's hand at parting, and made some pretty little speech that sounded very nicely indeed. And then, when the door had closed on her unwelcome visitor, she hurried upstairs and bolted herself into her own room, there to cry in peace.

"Oh, if Mr. Redburn had never sought me out, how much happier I should have been!" she sobbed. "If I go away to that place, I think some evil thing will happen to me. Did not Godwin's worst troubles come to him at Fairbridge?"

She went downstairs with such evident traces of tears on her face, that Harriet (almost for the first time) was thoroughly angry with her pet. Even to Mr. Milton, Beatrice's distress appeared so utterly unreasonable and absurd that he could not offer a word of sympathy. Not one of her friends could understand this strange unwillingness to make new acquaintances; and nothing seemed to be left to her but resignation.

She was to go to the Lindricks in the third week in May. Mr. Redburn had seen a great deal of her during his short stay in town, and further intercourse had strengthened his interest in her considerably. Yet, as Harriet angrily declared, Beatrice had not made the slightest effort to win his favour. In his presence, she had seemed so cold and apathetic that it was a marvel that his liking continued. But she could not put him out of humour with his friend'sdaughter, let her do what she would. And the old man evidently regarded her as the most interesting thing that was left to him in life.

It chanced that Godwin was a good deal occupied just before the time of her departure. And, well as he loved her, he could not sympathise with her extraordinary reluctance to leave town for a visit to Fairbridge. His love was as free from worldliness as it was possible for any attachment to be, but he could not be blind to the advantages of Mr. Redburn's affection for his betrothed. It was well-nigh impossible for the old man's life to hold out much longer; Beatrice, well-dowered, might come to Godwin's home far sooner than he had ever dared to hope. But she refused to listen to the voice of the charmer, and stopped her ears with an obstinacy that quite astonished him. When he spoke, sensibly enough, of prudence and policy,

Beatrice, his own sunny Beatrice, looked up at him with misery in her eyes, and answered him not a word.

The May of that year was so bright and balmy that it seemed to have forestalled the fuller sweetness of June.

Sitting alone in a compartment of a first-class carriage, Beatrice looked out upon richly-wooded slopes, all wearing the tender green of early summer. The train had left London more than two hours ago, and was now drawing near Fairbridge in the light of a lovely afternoon; a light that shone on broad, marshy meadows, golden with large water-buttercups and fragrant with the sweet breath of hawthorn bushes. Then came a stately grey church, just visible through the light foliage of oak and beech, then an ivy-grown bridge arching over a swift stream, and, lastly, a quiet railway-station, and Colonel Lindrick's tall figure on the platform.

No one would have guessed that a heavy heart was beating in the girl's bosom, as she stepped quietly out of the train. The Colonel thought her the daintiest specimen of womanhood that had charmed his eyes for many a day. She wore a brown tweed costume, tailor-made, a little brown velvet toque, and a single red rose and spray of fern at her throat. Hers was the kind of beauty that looks best in plain attire, and Harriet, who had an instinctive knowledge of the art of dress, always proved a safe adviser.

"If I were only a young man!" thought Colonel Lindrick, as he helped her into his carriage, and placed himself by her side.

Miserable as she really was, a certain proper pride enabled Beatrice to play her part to perfection. Moreover, she had no grudge against Colonel Lindrick, who had never given himself those guardian-like airs which made Mr. Redburn's manner distasteful to her. With the Colonel, she could be at ease, helping him to sustain a conversation, showing just the right amount of enthusiasm about the scenery, and asking just the right questions about Fairbridge and its inhabitants. The drive was short. Half an hour after they had left the railway-station, the carriage turned into a well-kept sweep, shaded by old chestnuts in full blossom, and then drew up before the pillared portico of Oak Lodge.

Alma, looking her best in a pretty grey gown, came forward to meet her guest with her pleasant woman-of-the-world manner. Mr. Redburn, with real feeling in that yellow visage of his, took Beatrice by both hands, and surveyed her with quite a fatherly pride. They seated her in an arm-chair near the window, gave her tea, and surrounded her with a genial atmosphere.

When she went to her room to dress for dinner, Beatrice found that a good deal of her depression had passed away. Standing for a minute at a large bay-window, she gazed across the smooth lawn and gay flower-beds towards a low wall surmounted by tall shrubs, and knew that this was the boundary that divided the grounds of Oak Lodge from those of Meadow House. Along that road, just seen

between the chestnuts, Godwin Earle had often walked in times gone by. Under these blossoming trees he had wooed his first love when

> "There was but one beloved face on earth,
> And that was shining on him."

A woman so perfectly and entirely loved in the present could not be really jealous of the past. She could even smile, with a little pardonable triumph, when she looked at her own face in the glass, and thought how much fresher and fairer it was than the faded face downstairs. And then, as she went back to the drawing-room, she made up her mind that she would try honestly to like Alma very much, and endeavour to enjoy this much-dreaded visit to Fairbridge.

Not one word had been said to Mr. Redburn about her engagement. It was understood by the Miltons that the betrothal should be kept a secret till Godwin's circumstances enabled him to claim his bride. As to his relations, Earle had ceased to correspond with any of them; and there was no one who had any right to interfere with the pair, or demand their confidence. But there was one person who had determined that, if there was a love affair, it should be speedily brought to light. And that person was Alma Lindrick.

Beatrice, in a soft India silk gown, sat composedly through dinner, never dreaming of the plot that was hatched in Alma's brain. Miss Lindrick was a good hostess, and that evening she had a double part to play. She wanted to win Beatrice's trust, and find out all that was hidden in her heart. And she wanted Mr. Redburn to think that she had taken a sincere liking to his adopted daughter. It was of the utmost importance that the old coffee-planter should believe her to be perfectly free from the slightest jealousy of Beatrice.

There was music in the drawing-room after dinner. The girls sang and played, and grew friendly over the piano. But the name of Godwin Earle never once passed Alma's lips; nor did she refer, even in the remotest way, to that night at the theatre. They talked freely of town amusements, and criticised actors and actresses; but no mention was made of the meeting in the Lyceum, and nothing was said about Richmond. Beatrice, who had dreaded having to talk about her lover, was reassured by Alma's silence. She began to think it was quite unlikely that Miss Lindrick suspected any affair between Godwin and herself.

A little later, when Mr. Redburn had called her to his side in the twilight, her heart began to soften towards the lonely old man. He talked to her of old Indian days, of her father, of things that she had often longed to hear about. Captain Ward was represented as a hero to his delighted daughter. And to old Redburn he had been a hero indeed. In the eyes of other people, he had simply seemed a handsome man, tall and straight, who carried his head high, and looked every inch a soldier—a man who had plenty of pluck and dash, and was as true as steel and as open as day. But Mr.

Redburn, in his extravagant friendship, had magnified a good many common English qualities into wonderful gifts, and the result was, that poor Ward was described as a sort of demi-god.

"If you could only have known him better, my dear!" said the old man, with a sigh. "You were scarcely fifteen when you saw him last? Ah, well, he was a father to be proud of!"

"I wish you had known mamma, too," said Beatrice.

"So do I. But you must have been a mere baby when she died. Your father has often told me what a sweet, gentle thing she was. He might have married again from the best of the girls out there. Not one of them would have refused him; in fact, it used to amuse me to see how he was run after. But he never could bear to think of putting anyone in your mother's place."

"That was so nice of him," said Beatrice, softly.

"Everything that he did was nice. And you were always first in his thoughts. 'When I see my little girl again, I will do this or that,' he would say, a dozen times a day. It was one of his dreams that we should all live at home together—he and I and the little girl. Poor dear fellow, who could possibly foresee that he would be the first to go? It seems absurd that a battered old fogey like myself should have outlived him!"

The girl looked at him with the tenderest interest and sympathy. Colonel Lindrick had gone over to his daughter, who still sat at the piano, playing a waltz.

"I would have given a great deal if his dream could have been realised," Mr. Redburn went on. "He always said that I must help him to take care of you; and now, you see, I am here alone. If he had lived, what a happy home we three could have made together!"

Beatrice was silent. Dearly as she loved the memory of her father, she could hardly regret the course that her life had taken. The path that leads us straight to our heart's love must always be the right road. In her sorrow and loneliness, she had gone out into the empty fields at dawn, and found another soul more sorrowful and lonely than her own.

"We must know each other better, child," said the old man in a pleading tone. "We must not be satisfied with a meeting now and then. I want you to tell me all about your life with the Miltons. Are you contented with them?"

"Quite contented," she answered promptly. "You know that my father always had a high opinion of Harriet Milton?"

"Yes, yes. But there is the governessing. You must give that up, my dear—you must indeed. I am not going to let you spoil your good looks by worrying yourself with naughty children."

"I am not worrying myself in the least," said Beatrice, with a sunny smile. "But I should not mind giving up my pupils very much. Everybody seems to object to them," she added, thinking of Godwin.

"We must make changes." Mr. Redburn's manner was becoming more and more authoritative. "I almost think it will be best to find you a new home."

"A new home! I cannot leave Harriet, Mr. Redburn. It was my grandfather's last wish that I should go to her. What would have become of me through the past twelve months if she had not given me her love and shelter? No mother could have cared for me more tenderly than Harriet has done."

"I did not mean to separate you entirely from Mrs. Milton; I know how good she has been," said the old man, with a touch of pettishness in his voice. "There are no plans formed yet. I have not even made up my mind where I shall live."

"Don't let us think of changes," the girl said, gently. "You have only just come home, you know; and you have got to see people, and get well and strong. Why do you concern yourself so much about poor little me, Mr. Redburn?"

"I ought to have concerned myself about you sooner," he replied. "If I were to devote all my thoughts to myself, child, I should be the most wretched old man in the universe. Don't be impatient if I want to meddle a little with your affairs, Beatrice. Try to think of me as an uncle, or a guardian, or even a grandfather!"

"I shall always think of you as one of my best and kindest friends," she answered, quietly.

But he was not quite satisfied.

"I must be more than a friend," he insisted. "You are alone in the world, my dear; and poor Ward, if he could speak to you now, would tell you to trust yourself to my guidance. A girl needs a guide."

"I have a safe guide in Mrs. Milton," said Beatrice, with gentle decision.

Alma, playing softly, heard the reply, and smiled to herself. The autocratic old man had met with his match, she thought, with some amusement. He had expected to find a ready-made daughter in Beatrice, docile, submissive, willing to accept his mandates and his money. But here was a girl who had a spirit of her own, and was actually impolitic enough to let it be seen.

Colonel Lindrick, also listening, exchanged a glance with Alma. He admired Miss Ward's pluck, although he mentally set her down as an impetuous little fool.

"Tut, tut! Mrs. Milton is all very well, but she is not a man, and she has seen nothing of the world. I tell you that a girl needs a guardian. She wants to be led and taught by some one who knows what life is. Don't you understand?"

Beatrice did thoroughly understand. And she could not help thinking triumphantly that she was already provided with a guardian who possessed all the requisite qualities. But she only said "yes" in her very softest voice.

"Ah," sighed Mr. Redburn, a little soothed, "I am glad you are not more than nineteen, my child. It will be such a pleasure to direct you and manage things for you. I believe the charge of you will prolong my life."

"What will he say by-and-bye, when he finds that some one else has undertaken the charge of me?" mused Beatrice. And then, remembering her father's old friendship with Mr. Redburn, she resolved to hear his domineering speeches with exemplary patience. After all, he had no power over her life's happiness. Her fate had been decided before he came from India.

Out of consideration for his health, Mr. Redburn went early to rest. A staid man-servant, who had come home with him, attended him to his room every night. And Beatrice looked after the retreating figure with genuine pity for his feebleness.

"Poor old man," sighed Alma Lindrick, when the door had closed upon her father's guest. She had risen from the piano, and had crossed over to the corner where Beatrice sat. There was a small fire burning in the grate, for Mr. Redburn found the evening chill.

"Are you not too warm here?" Alma asked, with a kind little air of concern. She laid her hand as she spoke on the girl's smooth cheek, and the caress seemed strange to Beatrice. She had not expected Miss Lindrick to treat her so affectionately.

"A little too warm," she admitted, rising. "What a lovely night it is! How beautiful your grounds are looking in this moonlight!"

"Come to the window, and you will see them better," said Alma, leading her across the room. "Don't you like to hear the chestnuts rustling in the evening wind? They are great friends of mine—those dear old trees; they always seem to whisper to me of 'the days that are no more!'"

There was something plaintive in Miss Lindrick's voice; her face, illumined by the moonlight, looked sweet and spiritual at that moment. Beatrice glanced at her, and began to think that she should find it no difficult matter to be her friend.

"They are whispering other things to you," the plaintive voice continued. "They are saying that your happy days are yet to come. You are young, and life is just beginning to be very sweet. Is not that true?"

"Perhaps," Beatrice confessed.

"Ah, I thought so! It must be dreadful to be torn away from those you love best, and brought here to be the companion of that poor old man! We cannot hope that you will enjoy your visit to us, although we will do all we can to make it pleasant."

"It will be pleasant, I am sure. You are very kind," said Beatrice, with genuine gratitude.

"You must find it hard to bear with Mr. Redburn's dictatorial manner," Alma went on confidentially. "And he really has no right to

assume that air of proprietorship. But he has persuaded himself that he is to have the ordering of your life, now and always."

"He cannot have his will," said Beatrice, quietly. "I shall be sorry to thwart him; but I am not quite the child he takes me for."

"I heard him talking as if you were nine instead of nineteen! He is a regular autocrat, I'm afraid. You will have to assert your freedom very soon."

"I shall find out what he wants to do with me before I oppose him."

"Oh, he just wants to manage everything for you, that is all. You are to have no will but his, and in return for your submissiveness he will give you heaps of money. Papa says you are a very fortunate girl indeed."

"I should be very unfortunate if I were forced to resign my liberty. But that can never be," said Beatrice.

"Still, it will be wise to humour him. Ah, I see plainly that there is no worldly wisdom in you! And one can't help admiring a frank, independent nature; it is so rarely met with."

Alma sighed as she spoke, and looked away across the quiet lawn, where the moonshine lay white and still.

"There is a sort of romantic courage in you, Miss Ward," she said, after a pause. "You would give up any of the world's best things for the sake of the one you loved. Would you not? I fancy I can read your character."

"I believe I am easily read," replied Beatrice, simply.

"That was what I thought when I had my first glimpse of your face," said Alma, turning and looking at her intently. "I saw you twice, you know, before we knew each other. The first time was at the Lyceum—the second at the Star and Garter."

Beatrice did her best to be perfectly cool and unembarrassed, and prepared herself for what was to come next. But nothing more did come. Miss Lindrick suddenly changed the subject by declaring that she looked tired.

"How thoughtless of me to keep you here, when you must be longing to go to your room!" she said, anxiously. "You have had a long journey, and that talk with Mr. Redburn must have worn you out. I am afraid he will inflict himself upon you to-morrow after breakfast; but I shall take you out of his clutches as soon as I can. I will not let you be worried and bored to death if I can help it."

And full of affectionate solicitude, Alma accompanied her guest to the very door of her room. There she left her with a winning smile and a few kindly parting words.

"Good-night, dear Miss Ward. Don't listen any longer to those trees to-night. Get some sleep, and I will show you all my old haunts to-morrow!"

But some hours passed away before Beatrice could close her eyes.

There were so many things to think about and wonder over. Mr. Redburn was going to make himself objectionable; all her worst fears about him were certain to be realised. He was a man who had never been seriously opposed in his life: and to be thwarted by a mere girl, just out of the school-room, would work him up into positive fury. She must make the best of the situation, however; Harriet and Godwin had preached patience and forbearance. It was clear that they did not understand her romantic indifference about money. And they were right, of course; quite right in all that they had said; but she found herself wishing, for the hundredth time at least, that the old man had stayed in India.

It was not easy to resist Miss Lindrick's caressing ways, and she had surprised Beatrice into liking her very much. The surface sweetness, which had charmed Godwin Earle in his younger days, had taken a quick effect on Beatrice Ward. She had looked on Alma as a shallow, cold-hearted woman of the world; and to-night there had been hints of deep feeling and unsuspected sorrow which had contradicted her first ideas. Alma was a good many years older than herself, and the petting manner sat well on her. It was pleasant—so pleasant that Beatrice began to feel heartily ashamed of her prejudice.

Early next morning, she found time to write a note to Godwin before breakfast. It was a cheerful little note, containing some very kind words about Miss Lindrick; and when it was written, Beatrice felt she could meet her hostess with a clearer conscience. She put the letter into her pocket, unwilling to leave it lying on the hall-table, where all might read the address. It was just possible, she thought, that the sight of her old lover's name, in another woman's handwriting, might give Alma a faint thrill of pain.

Miss Lindrick met her guest with the pleasantest of greetings and a gift of freshly-gathered flowers. Mr. Redburn breakfasted in his own room, and Beatrice enjoyed her morning meal all the better for his absence. The Colonel made much of her; Alma smiled and talked with quiet gaiety. Out of doors, the grass was glittering with dew-diamonds, and lilacs and chestnuts were tossed by the softest of May breezes. The garden was a little paradise of blossom and song; on the whole it seemed that there was plenty of sweetness in life at Oak Lodge.

(To be continued.)

NOBODY ELSE.

Two little hands so careful and brisk
  Putting the tea-things away ;
While mother is resting awhile in her chair,
  For she has been busy all day.
And the dear little fingers are working for love,
  Although they are tender and wee.
" I'll do it so nicely," she says to herself—
  " There's nobody else, you see."

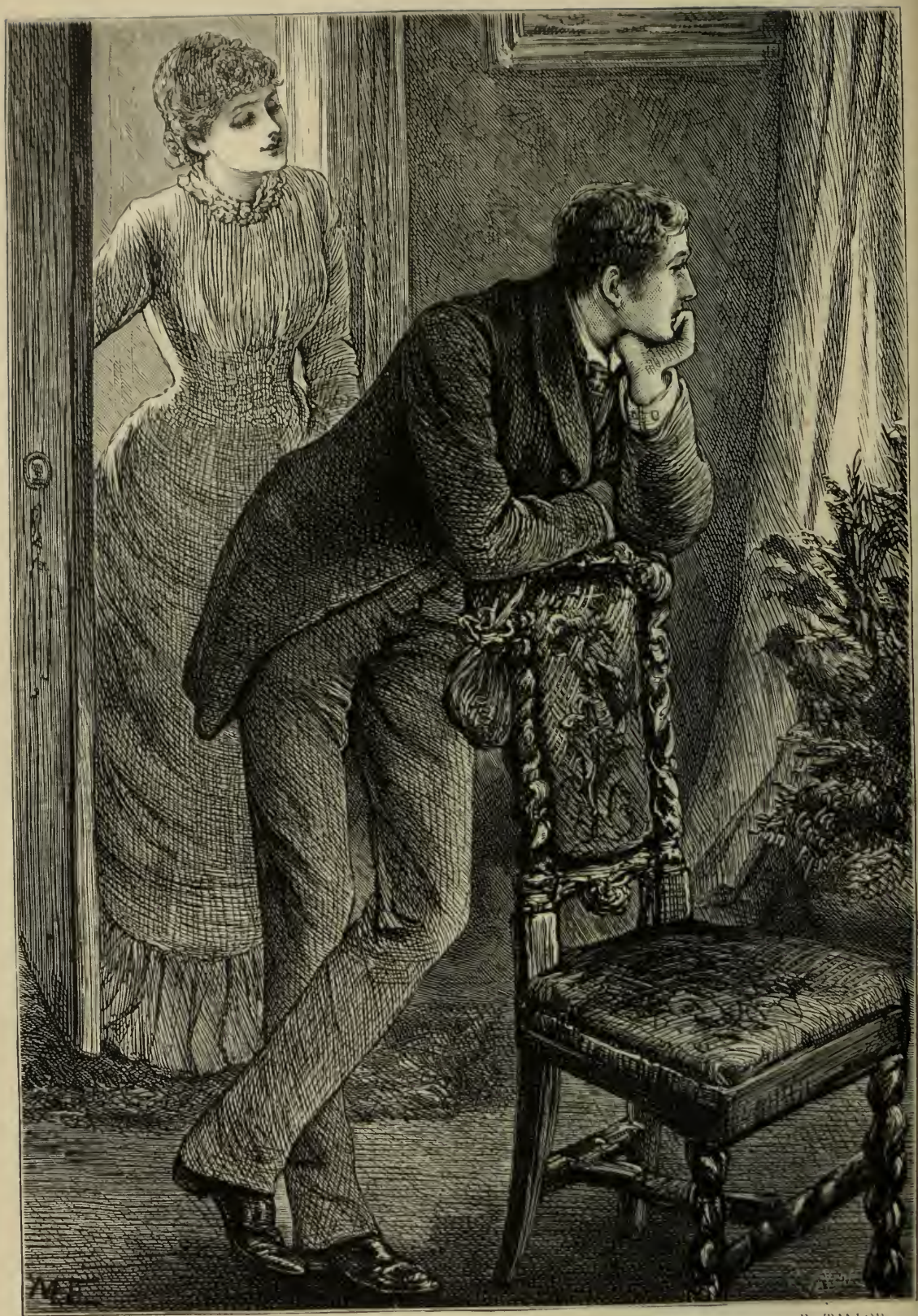
Two little feet just scampered upstairs,
  For Daddy will quickly be here ;
And his shoes must be ready and warm by the fire,
  That is burning so bright and so clear.
Then she must climb on a chair to keep watch.
  " He cannot come in without me.
When mother is tired, I open the door—
  There's nobody else, you see."

Two little arms round Daddy's dear neck,
  And a soft, downy cheek 'gainst his own ;
For out of the nest so cosy and bright,
  The little one's mother has flown.
She brushes the tear-drops away, as she thinks,
  " Now he has no one but me.
I mustn't give way ; that would make him so sad—
  And there's nobody else, you see."

Two little tears on the pillow, just shed,
  Dropped from the two pretty eyes.
Two little arms stretching out in the dark,
  Two little faint sobbing cries.
" Daddy forgot I was always waked up
  When he whispered ' Good-night ' to me.
O mother, come back just to kiss me in bed—
  There's nobody else, you see."

Little true-heart, if mother can look
  Out from her home in the skies,
She will not pass on to her Haven of Rest
  While the tears dim her little one's eyes.
If God has shed sorrow around us just now,
  Yet His sunshine is ever to be !
And He is the comfort for everyone's pain—
  There's nobody else, you see.

MAY HODGES.



M. ELLEN STAPLES. R. TAYLOR.

AS HE STOOD THUS THINKING, THE ROOM DOOR WAS SLOWLY PUSHED OPEN, AND REGINA APPEARED.

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XI.

MYSTIFICATION.

CHARLES BAUMGARTEN sat in his chambers, Pump Court, Temple, enjoying an animated discussion with his friend, Jephson, the great Chancery lawyer. About a week had gone by since Charles had come home from Circuit and held that momentous interview with Mary Dynevor which had been broken in upon by the Subdean. Mary had now gone, with some friends, to Brighton for change of air, and Charles was, so to say, a bachelor at large again. The change from despair to hope had so elated him that he had somewhat rashly likened it to Elysium. For on this morning, a matter had occurred not at all in harmony with the ease said to be the portion of the denizens of the Elysian Fields. A certain ugly-looking bill for eighty-one pounds, bearing Charles's acceptance, had been presented to him for payment.

Charles declined to pay it, on the ground that he had not accepted it. He repudiated the bill altogether. It was held by that eminent legal firm, Godfrey and Herbert Jephson; the latter of whom had now come to Pump Court in person, bringing the bill with him.

"I never saw it in my life until to-day," protested Charles Baumgarten. "You have been imposed upon."

Mr. Jephson laughed. In days gone by, they had been very intimate at the University together, and had there formed a close friendship: though Herbert Jephson was the elder by some years. "Stuff and nonsense!" quoth he; "would you deny your own signature? Look at it."

Charles had looked enough at it, but looked again. "I don't deny that it's a clever imitation, except in one particular. This is signed 'C. Baumgarten:' I always sign 'Charles' in full. Look over my notes to you, Jephson, should you have kept any, and see if I ever signed myself in any other way."

"If you never did it before, that's no reason why you might not have done it on this occasion," was the unanswerable response.

"I have never done it," returned Charles. "Now, consider, Jephson. You have known me well for two years; Godfrey knows me: do you think it likely that I would repudiate a bill of my own acceptance? Am I capable of it?"

"It is scarcely possible to believe so. But there *is* the bill."

"And if it were mine, I would take it up, did it involve a sum that would ruin me. Do you remember that bill in my college days, which was such a nightmare to me; and some of you wanted me to plead minority and get rid of it?"

"And you stuck out for honour, and declined the advice, and went into unheard of straits to take it up. I remember."

"Well, Jephson, that bill was a life's lesson to me. I declare to you that I have never given another or accepted one. I don't believe I ever shall."

The bill, dated London, was drawn a month ago. Charles could not plead that he was then on Circuit, as he ought to have been. It was a curious coincidence that at the date of the bill he was in London, having run up for a couple of days upon some intricate law business, which without him was at a standstill.

"How do you say it came into your hands, Jephson?" he asked.

"We received it from White, the engraver and jeweller," was the reply. "Some property White is entitled to got thrown into Chancery, and we have been acting for him. The expenses are draining him, and he had some difficulty to pay our last bill of costs. My brother pressed for it: one can't work for nothing: and White brought this bill of yours, and asked if we would take it in payment. Godfrey did so, and handed White the balance."

"You ought to have doubted how a bill of mine should get into a jeweller's hands."

"Not at all," drawled Jephson, who was exceedingly indolent in manner and speech. "Rather likely hands for a gentleman's bill to get into, I should say. White told us the bill was given for jewellery you had bought."

"Jewellery!" retorted Charles. "All the jewellery I have bought in the last six months is a silver pencil case—if you can call that jewellery; and for that I gave seven shillings and paid at the time. I am not likely to lay out eighty-one pounds in jewellery: I am laying by for something far more important than that."

"Well, what's to be done?"

"Nothing—as far as I am concerned. You'll not get me to pay a bill I've never seen or heard of."

"We must protest it, Baumgarten."

"I can't help that."

They came to no satisfactory conclusion. And Mr. Jephson departed, taking the bill with him: declaring to the last, in his idle,

joking manner, that the bill was undoubtedly Charles Baumgarten's and might have been accepted in his sleep.

Charles was busy all day. After snatching his dinner in the evening, he went out to call upon the elder of the two Jephsons; for, in spite of his assertion that he should do nothing, the affair was giving him concern, and he determined to look into it. Godfrey Jephson lived in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn; a keen, grasping man was he, quite a contrast to his brother Herbert. He was in his dining-room, but came out of it at once to Mr. Baumgarten.

"It is incomprehensible to me how you can deny the signature," he said, entering upon the matter at once. "If you saw my signature, or Herbert's, you would know them, would you not?"

"Yes. But ——"

"And we, in the same way, know yours," he interrupted. "I recognised it the moment I saw it. White is a respectable man; there's not a more upright tradesman in the city of London; he is not one to say you accepted the bill, if you did not. It is most strange that you should disown it, Mr. Baumgarten."

"Did White tell you I accepted it?"

"He told Herbert. I have not had time to see him."

"Go with me to him now," suggested Charles. "He will not say to my face that I have bought jewellery of him and paid him with a bill. I never saw the man in my life to my knowledge and never was inside his shop."

Godfrey Jephson, his interest and curiosity aroused, agreed to the proposal; and they proceeded in the dusk of the spring evening to the jeweller's, in one of the leading thoroughfares. A shopman was standing at the door.

"Mr. White in?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, sir."

"You go forward first," whispered Charles, "and enter upon it. I should like to watch his countenance. I'll come and confront him at the right time."

A smile, that caused Charles to knit his brow, crossed Mr. Jephson's face as he advanced to the jeweller. The shop was brilliant with gas. Charles sat down near the entrance, as if to wait for his friend.

"This bill," began Godfrey Jephson, taking it from his pocket-book, "was due to-day, and presented for payment. Mr. Baumgarten refuses to take it up. He says it is a forgery."

"But how can Mr. Baumgarten say that?" returned the jeweller, after a few moments given to what looked like astonishment. "He accepted the bill in my presence."

"Mr. Baumgarten says that he does not know you, and that he never was in your shop to his recollection," continued the lawyer.

"Why, how is it possible that he can assert so palpable a falsehood?" retorted Mr. White. "He was here when he bought the

jewellery, and has been in once or twice besides. Let me come face to face with him, Mr. Jephson, and you'll see whether he will dare deny it. He must and shall pay the bill."

Charles Baumgarten walked slowly forward, and the jeweller's eyes fell upon him. "Why, that—that— is Mr. Baumgarten!" he uttered, though in a tone of hesitation.

"Yes; I am Charles Baumgarten. There's some mistake here, Mr. White, that I cannot understand. How is it that you told Mr. Jephson we have had dealings together?"

"Because we have had them," returned the jeweller. "The question is, how is it that you deny it? I recognise you fully now, sir. You purchased several articles of jewellery of me and paid me with this bill."

"I never bought a shilling's worth of jewellery of you in my life," replied Charles Baumgarten. "But if I had, I should not have been likely to pay you by a bill. If I bought jewellery, I should pay you in cash for it."

"And that is what you were going to do, sir: there's no doubt you came in with the intention of paying it," returned Mr. White. "You asked me to make the account out, and I did so. You laughed when you looked at the sum total, it was so much more than you had thought for; and you took out your pocket-book and counted the bank notes in it, and then said you had not much more than half enough with you and the shortest way would be to draw a short bill, say at a month's notice. I had no objection. I took a bill stamp from my desk, drew out the bill, and you accepted it at this very counter."

"It is all news to me," replied Charles. "I repeat to you, Mr. White, that I never was in this shop before to-night. I never signed or saw the bill; I never bought any jewellery here whatever."

The jeweller appeared mystified. Certainly Charles Baumgarten did not look like a man who would deny his own responsibility; moreover, the young barrister's irreproachable character was well known. Yet Mr. White knew that he had come in and bought the jewellery.

"You may as well seek to persuade me that the sun never shone, Mr. Baumgarten," he remarked. "Why, after the transaction was over, and while my man was putting up your purchases, did you not come into that room at the back there, and drink a glass of old Madeira? You complained of feeling chilled, and I persuaded you to take it."

"It is altogether absurd!" retorted Charles, vexed at the words. "I never did anything of the sort, and you must be mistaking me for someone else. Had I bought jewellery, I should have paid for it in cash, I tell you; not by a bill."

"You took one glass of old Madeira at White's," observed Jephson as they walked up the street; "I think you must have taken *two* before you went there."

"I see you believe White, and not me."

"There's no possibility of disbelieving White. Whereas you—why, Baumgarten, it is your own handwriting! Shall you take up the bill?"

"No. It is none of mine."

"What shall you do?" asked Mr. Jephson.

"I shall sleep upon it; and perhaps have a quiet word with a gentleman-detective."

As he gained Pump Court, having wished Godfrey Jephson good-evening, and turned into it in a brown study, a whistle high up greeted him. Gazing upwards, Charles perceived the face and whiskers of a friend of his looking out from the window of some chambers not far from his own.

"Hi, Baumgarten! Come up."

"Can't. Have some work to do."

"Then take the consequences."

A shower of something liquid was in preparation of descent. Charles Baumgarten made a dash, and disappeared up the stairs. Peter Chester—a grandson of that old Mr. Chester who was once Rector of Great Whitton, though the reader may have forgotten him—received Charles with a basin of hot soup in his hand.

"You'd have caught it nicely, Charley, basin and all! Just look at the precious stuff she concocts for a fellow, dying, pretty near, of an inflamed throat! I told her beef-tea, and she goes and makes this."

Charles knew of the storms that Peter Chester, who, like himself, lived in his chambers for economy's sake, and his old laundress had together. "Is your throat no better?" he asked.

"Much you care whether it's better or worse!" retorted Peter Chester, a slight young man, with a delicate face and blue eyes. "I'd never go from my word, Baumgarten. You promised to come in and sit with a fellow last night, but deuce a bit came you."

"I added 'if I could,' Peter."

"Well, if you could not—that's to say, as you did not—you might have sent Joe in to tell me so. Just get ill yourself, and see how lively your evenings would be with your throat in flannel, expecting a fellow who never comes!"

"I was coming in at eight o'clock, when old Tomkins called in, and asked me to give him a glass of wine, while he talked over old times. Every quarter of an hour I thought he'd go; instead of which he stuck on till eleven o'clock and finished the bottle."

"You'll shine at the Bar, Charley, when you can invent a white lie after that rapid fashion, and stare a man in the face as you tell it."

"Tomkins was in my chambers."

"Tomkins might be. But you were not."

"What do you mean, Peter?"

Peter Chester was looking at him, and laughing in a most provoking manner. "I don't see why you should make a mystery of

it, Baumgarten," he said. "If you did choose to go out to enjoy yourself, instead of passing the evening with a sick chum, there's no reason why you should not admit it."

"Admit what?" asked Charles.

"Only you might have dropped me half a word by Joe. Who was the lady? Come, Charley: confession's good for the conscience."

"Tell me what you want me to confess, and perhaps I may do it. I'm all in the dark."

"Oh, of course," mockingly returned Peter Chester. "But a truce to jesting, old fellow," he added in a different tone. "Why need you keep it so quiet? Who was the lady?"

"What lady?"

"That you escorted last night to the Haymarket. Grand tier; first row."

"I was not at the Haymarket last night," returned Charles.

"Oh, but you *were*," answered Peter Chester, with an emphasis that unmistakably pronounced his own belief in it.

"Hear me a minute, Chester," quietly returned Charles. "I have this evening been pretty nearly persuaded out of my own identity, and I don't care to enter upon another discussion of a similar nature. I have told you that Tomkins was with me last night until eleven o'clock, and I told you truth. I did not stir out of my chambers, and by a quarter past eleven I was in bed."

When we assert a thing in good faith, it is somewhat annoying to find the assertion received doubtfully. Peter Chester stared at Charles. He knew him to be truthful; but he did not believe him now—and Charles saw he didn't.

"It was in this way," narrated Peter. "Satchel looked in this morning on his way to Court, just to ask how my throat got on. 'Hope you enjoyed waiting for Baumgarten last night, Chester,' said he—for he had offered to stop the evening with me, and I told him I didn't want him; I should have Baumgarten; 'hope you were jolly: *he* was.' 'Why?' said I, 'how do you know? Baumgarten never came.' 'No,' returned Satchel; 'he was at the Haymarket, rather close to a lady all the night: saw a good deal more of her face than he did of the stage.'—I say, though, Charley, you were a bold fellow: suppose Mary Dynevor had come up from Brighton and been there?"

"I wonder Satchel did not say it was Mary Dynevor—or you," retorted Charles Baumgarten.

"You would not like it if we did," returned Peter Chester. "This looked like quite another style of damsel. Satchel thinks you had been punishing the wine, for he never saw you so gay and sparkling before: quite an improvement on the usual staid quietness of Charles Baumgarten. He told you so."

"Told me so!" repeated Charles, in astonishment. "Does Satchel say he spoke to me? At the theatre?"

Peter Chester nodded. "He spoke to you in the throng coming

out; but he could not get very near you, he says; only gave you a few words over the people's heads."

"He gave them to somebody else; not to me."

At which remark Peter Chester laughed as heartily as his throat allowed him.

Charles stayed with him until ten o'clock, and then went home to his chambers, letting himself in with his latch key. Turning up the gas in the inner room, where he generally sat, he touched the bell upon the table. Joe came in to answer it. He was a smart lad of fifteen, who slept in the chambers.

"Anyone been here, Joe?"

"No, sir, not since I came back," replied the boy.

"When was that?"

"Only now, sir."

"Only now!" repeated Charles Baumgarten. "Why, where did you stay?"

"They kept me ever so long down there, sir, while they was answering of the note—I put it upon your table, sir. Mother was here, too, to answer anybody that might ring. She had some work to do."

"Well, look here, Joe. If you are going to take to be long on your errands—as you have been several times lately—I shall have to replace you with someone who can be quicker. You can go to bed now."

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT THE BISHOP SAW ON THE BLOTTING-PAD.

EARLY the following morning, while Charles was at his breakfast, and before the arrival of his clerk, he was surprised by a visit from the Bishop of Denham. The same bishop, only older, whose ear for music was deficient, as he once confided to Lady Grace. A good but rather strict and straitlaced man, who had never ceased to take an interest in Charles since Dean Baumgarten's death, with whom he had been very friendly. His carriage had brought him to Pump Court; at least, as near to it as was possible; he came up-stairs and apologised to Charles, who rose to receive him, for his early visit. He was on his way to Lambeth Palace, where he had an appointment.

The Bishop opened his business standing, saying he had not time to sit. It appeared that he was trustee for something or other, a very trivial affair, but it touched the rights of the Church, as he solemnly worded it, and an action at law was unavoidable; if his young friend felt sufficient confidence in himself to do them justice, he would see that he was appointed leading counsel; it might be a lift to him in his profession.

"Of course all this is sub rosâ," remarked the prelate. "You will receive particulars from the solicitors, together with the brief. I'll

write down one or two points, if you will give me pen-and-ink, to which your attention must be chiefly directed, and then if you think you can master them, I'll mention you to the solicitors."

"If your lordship will be at the trouble of sitting to my desk, you will find all you require at hand," said Charles, rising to pilot him to it.

Down sat the Bishop and wrote rapidly for five minutes. "Have you some blotting-paper?" he asked.

"The blotting-pad is under the paper you are writing upon," explained Charles, and the Bishop drew it out.

Bending his head, he stared at it through his spectacles. Then, turning his severe face to Charles, he spoke in a tone that ought to have annihilated him.

"Do you give this to me to use, sir?"

Charles advanced quickly, looked and stood confounded with vexation. On the blotting-pad, white and clean, for the top sheet must have been taken off, was a fancy drawing in pen-and-ink, bold, clear and well done, of half-a-dozen ballet girls in very airy costumes. The colour flew to Charles's face; he knew what the Bishop was. What on earth, would he judge, must be his private pastimes, if he could adorn his professional desk with such sketches, and set a Bishop down to regale his eyes with them?

Charles tore off the sheet in a heat. "I assure you, my lord, on my word of honour, that I know not how those—those things came there. Some one must have been here last night unknown to me, and taken the liberty to leave a remembrance behind him."

"Allow me to recommend you to burn it, sir," said the scandalised divine.

"Yes, but I will first of all endeavour to identify the offender," was Charles's answer.

Up rose the Bishop, his head erect, and his apron rustling.

Charles attended him down the stairs, but his lordship did not shake hands with him. Back tore Charley, two stairs at a time. Joe's mother, who lived near at hand, and came in to attend to the work at stated times, was then removing the breakfast-things.

"Were you here last night while Joe was out, Mrs. Tuff?"

"Yes, sir. I had some cleaning ——"

"Who came in?" interrupted Charles.

"Nobody came, sir: not a single soul."

"Who has been into this room this morning?" continued Charles.

"Only me, sir, to put it to rights."

"Did you do this, then?" asked Mr. Baumgarten, pushing the sheet of blotting-paper under her eyes.

"Me!" cried Mrs. Tuff, who was a sharp-faced little woman in a neat stuff gown and white cap. "You must be joking, sir. When I saw it there in dusting, I thought what odd looking ladies they was. And I put the writing-paper upon 'em, to cover 'em up a bit."

Charles reflected. "Joe wouldn't do it?" he remarked.

"*Joe!*" said Mrs. Tuff, in astonishment. "Why, sir, Joe would not dare do such a thing as that. He couldn't either. Joe haven't no talent that way. When he was a little one, I'd give him a pencil and piece of paper and tell him to draw the cat, but it would come out more like a pump."

"That just brings us round to my argument, that someone else has been in the room," said Charles. "Now I want to find out who that is."

"It must have been done in the day-time yesterday, sir."

"The last thing, before dinner, yesterday evening, after Mr. Clay left, I wrote a note at the table and used this blotting-pad," returned Mr. Baumgarten; "and left it as I used it, much marked with ink. "Did Mr. Clay come in last night for any purpose?"

"No, sir. And if he had, he'd not have left them disrespectful things behind him."

That was true enough. But Mr. Clay, joint clerk to Charles and another young barrister, might have let someone in who had so amused himself; some lawyer's clerk with a hasty brief, who possessed more skill than discretion. However, the woman persisted that no person whatever had entered; and Charles Baumgarten thought it a mystery, which seemed, for the moment, incapable of solution.

Sitting down to his desk, he began to look over some papers. A few minutes later, and Charles had occasion to open one of the deep drawers on either side the desk. He took his bunch of keys from his pocket, and fitted one into the lock. But it would not open. The lock had evidently been tampered with—and he had left it in perfect condition the previous evening. Mrs. Tuff was called in again.

"Will you believe now that some one has been at mischief in the room?" demanded her master. "They have been at the drawers: I cannot unlock them."

She stood, somewhat incredulous; and Mr. Baumgarten, taking another key, tried the opposite drawer. It opened readily, but he gazed at it as if transfixed. "Look here!" he sharply uttered.

The woman advanced and stood behind his chair. It was full of papers and parchments, all in a mass of inextricable confusion.

"Do you see this?" he cried, sharply.

"I see the drawer is in a fine mess," was her rejoinder.

"Now, listen, Mrs. Tuff. Yesterday evening, after I had written the note I spoke of, before I sealed it, I opened this drawer to put a parchment in: at that time it was in perfect order, and I locked it and left it so. There is some mystery in all this."

Mrs. Tuff could dispute facts no longer; she had to give in to the evidence of her eyes. "Sir," she said, "what a good thing it is that I was here last night instead of young Joe! We might have accused him of doing it for mischief."

"I don't know that it is a good thing," significantly retorted her master. "The fact must be that you dropped asleep last night and let someone get in."

The woman was indignant at the insinuation. "Sir," returned she, "I'd rather you accused me of doing it myself than say that. I don't think I as much as sat down last night, for I thought it a good opportunity to clean out the cupboards; and that's what I was doing the whole evening."

Dismissing her, Charles Baumgarten sat thinking it over. By a desperate wrench, he succeeded in opening the drawer, and its contents appeared to be untouched. Altogether, it was singular. Had anyone got in for the purpose of plunder, rummaged over the contents of one drawer, attempted the lock of the other, would he have been likely to leave his trail behind him in the shape of those ballet girls, whose appearance had nearly done for the Bishop? No. Charles concluded some one of his own acquaintances must have done it for a "lark," and he would very much like to find out which of them it was.

Only a few minutes had elapsed when Mrs. Tuff reappeared, asking permission to speak.

"It has all come over me this moment as clear as daylight, sir," she began, advancing a few steps into the room. "Some rogue must have got in last night through your leaving the key in the passage door."

"Through—what do you say?" asked her master.

"The latch-key, sir. You left it in the door when you went out the second time."

"I don't know what you mean, Mrs. Tuff. I did not leave my key in the door last night or any other night."

"Why, yes, sir, you did," was her answer, spoken in a tone of remonstrance. "Else how could I have got in?"

"What are you dreaming of now? You have your own key."

"But you took mine from me last night, sir. Don't you remember?" she added, seeing Mr. Baumgarten appeared not to comprehend. "When I came back, I found the latch-key in the door, and I knew you had left it there for me: but I thought it not a safe thing to do, sir, if you'll forgive me for saying it."

Charles Baumgarten looked at the woman in amazement, for not a syllable of what she was saying could he understand. He ordered her to explain.

"When you came back, sir, not long after you went out ——

"Stop a bit. We shall never come to the end in this way. I went out after dinner, and I came home at ten o'clock. I took my key with me, and let myself in with it on my return. What other tale are you telling?"

"I don't mean that at all, sir; I mean when you came back at dusk," obstinately persisted the woman.

"I did not come back at dusk."

Mrs. Tuff paused, wondering, no doubt, whether night and sleep

had affected her master's memory. "Sir," she said, "perhaps you might call things to mind if you tried. When you had gone away after dinner, I went out to do an errand or two, and had just shut the door, when you ran up the stairs, and took my key from me to let yourself in. I suppose you had forgotten to take out yours. I was away maybe half an hour, and when I came back what should I see but my latch-key outside the door—and I know my key from yours, sir, by the dent in it. I knew you had left it there for me to get in with: still I didn't think it was safe. London is such a place for thievery—and the Temple's no more secure than any other part."

"You have done a pretty thing," was the comment of Mr. Baumgarten. "It was not to me you gave the key."

The woman felt hurt. "I'm near-sighted, sir, I know that, and my eyes are sometimes at fault; but they are not so bad that I could mistake anybody else for my own master."

A silence ensued. Mrs. Tuff chiefly passed it in staring. Charles signed to her to retire.

He sat on, asking himself where and what the mystery could be. Personated at the jeweller's, his handwriting appearing upon a bill, accused of showing himself off at the Haymarket Theatre in questionable companionship, and now personated in his chambers to the deception of his own servant!

Had Cyras Baumgarten been in Europe, Charles might have supposed, remembering there used to be much likeness between them, and might be still, that he was the actor in all this; but, as Charles knew, Cyras was where he had been for some years past—in New Zealand.

An uncomfortable feeling clung to Charles all day: go where he would, he carried it about with him, even to the Courts and into the presence of the judges.

In the evening, he went to call at Eaton Place: he had not done so since Mary went to Brighton. Dr. Dynevor was still in town; and, much to Charles's surprise, he found that Mary was also: she had returned that day. Upon being admitted, he saw the maid, who had, as he knew, attended Mary, crossing the hall.

"You are back again, Sarah!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, we came up to-day," the girl answered, and proceeded to explain the reason. The family they were staying with at Brighton received news of the dangerous illness of a relative at Cheltenham, and had to speed thither at once.

Instead of being shown to the drawing-room as usual, Charles was marshalled to a small one off the dining-room, and Miss Dynevor came to him. By the fierce look of her flaxen wig, her raised eyebrows, and her haughty tone, Charles saw that something was amiss.

"Then it *is* Mr. Charles Baumgarten!" she exclaimed, as if his appearance solved a doubt. "When the butler announced your name,

I told him he must be mistaken. May I enquire the purport of your visit, sir?"

Charles laughed. Miss Dynevor was subject to changes of mood and manner, but he did not let them trouble him, any more than the boys and girls did. "I came to take tea with you for one thing, Miss Dynevor. And Mary has come home, I hear," was his answer.

"Yes; she has returned," stiffly responded Miss Dynevor. "But —you must be aware that it is not convenient to receive you this evening."

Charles looked at her: there was something in her voice, her manner, that he had never met before, and his pulses quickened with a sense of coming evil.

"Or at any future time," continued the lady, who had not taken a seat, or asked Charles to do so.

"But why?" exclaimed Charles. "What have I done?'

"You cannot really need to enquire, Charles Baumgarten, and it will be particularly unpleasant to me to inform you," said she.

"Nevertheless, I must press you to do so," said Charles. "A man cannot meet a charge blindfold, Miss Dynevor."

She drew herself up; the flaxen curls seemed to bristle. "I saw you in a situation, sir, the night before last at the play, which—which—which—in fact, perfectly shocked me. 'If, that dear defunct gentleman, the late Dean of Denham, had seen this,' I breathed to myself, 'he would have disowned his son—as we must do from this hour.' And I came straight home, I avow to you, sir, and acquainted my brother, and said sufficient to my nieces to satisfy them that you were a black sheep. Since Mary returned, I have explained to her; and—and—of course she will give you up."

Charles had listened to her with deference. "Now will you please tell me, Miss Dynevor, where you saw me, and what the 'situation' might be," he said when she had concluded.

"You are truly bold to ask it, Charles Baumgarten," she retorted. "But what else could I expect? No, sir; my communication is closed."

"I beg your pardon: your communication at present amounts to nothing. To continue it is due to me."

"Very due," she sarcastically answered. "And no less necessary than due, considering that you saw me as plainly as I saw you."

"Was it at the Haymarket theatre?"

Miss Dynevor gave vent to a modest little scream, which she smothered in her handkerchief.

"Whether it was at the Haymarket or whether it was at Westminster Abbey, it need not be alluded to," she retorted, "and I have never been subjected to speak of such things. You are a hypocrite, Charles Baumgarten; it is what most young men of the present day are. I've heard them compared to whited sepulchres and I think the comparison a very good one. Our interview is at at end, sir."

She swept away majestically, leaving Charles to make an ignominious exit from the house. But Charles was not in a hurry to do it. He wanted to explain: yet with whom? The Sub-dean was so hot and peppery, especially in the first blush of an affair, that an explanation with him generally did more harm than good. Apart from that, what explanation had Charles to give? None. None that would be believed.

As he stood thus thinking, the room door was slowly pushed open and Regina appeared.

"She's gone, isn't she, Charley? Was she very dreadful?"

"Very," returned Charley, shutting the door.

"When Aunt Ann has a grievance, no one can come up to her, and it's many a year since she had such a grievance as this one," went on Regina. "Oh, Charley, what fun it was!—how did you pluck up the courage?—and who was it?"

"Just tell me what you've heard," said he.

"That you were at the Haymarket Theatre, in its most conspicuous place, beauing a lady with painted cheeks. We got it all out of Janet, Aunt Ann's maid. You should have heard Aunt Ann in her room last night, old Janet says, and all the names she called you!"

"I suppose this has been told to Mary?"

"Trust Aunt Ann for that. Who was the lady, Charley?"

"I wonder, Regina, whether you'll believe me if I tell you something?"

"Try me. Perhaps you are going to say it was Gertrude?"

"Gertrude is at Great Whitton, you know. I don't know who it was, Regina, for I was not at the theatre at all."

"Not at the theatre!"

"No. I was in chambers all the night. "I've heard of this already. A friend of Peter Chester's thought he saw me there—just as you describe. It must have been some fellow who bears a resemblance to me. Can't you get Mary to come down to me? Do, Regina. And you will please tell her *from me* that there's not a word of truth in the tale. I must see her for a minute or two."

"She will have to smuggle herself down the staircase, then! Aunt Ann is sure to be on the watch," returned Regina. "I'll go and see."

Very shortly Mary came stealing in. She was looking pale, but in better health than before she went to Brighton. Charles stood before her in agitation.

"Mary, before I attempt to greet you, let me assure you that the story which they have got up about me is utterly false. *You* will not believe it?"

"Oh, no, no," she wildly said, as she burst into tears and put her head upon his breast. He was about to clasp her in his arms when the door was flung back and Dr. Dynevor walked in.

"To your room, young lady," he cried out imperiously to the

terrified girl, who had drawn away from her lover, with a gasp. "Have you no sense of shame? To your room, I say."

Closing the door after her retreating figure, the Canon turned his wrath upon Charles. "How dare you appear at this house?"

Charles knew what that wrath meant, and strove to arm himself for the contest. "There's no reason, sir, why I should not appear," he was beginning, when the Sub-dean stopped him, all the floodgates of his temper let loose.

To Charles's confused astonishment, he found that all was known. The repudiated bill for jewellery; the lady with painted cheeks on his arm at the theatre; the disreputable ballet girls on his blotting-pad. The last item had been confidentially mentioned that afternoon by the Bishop of Denham.

Meeting Dr. Dynevor on his return to town, the Doctor, full of wrath, even then, had told the prelate about Charles and the Haymarket episode, upon which the Bishop, sadly put out for Charles's sake, reciprocated the information by telling of the pen-and-ink sketches.

"He is going to the—ahem!—to the bad all one way," growled the Sub-dean—and would have said the "deuce," but remembered to whom he was talking.

Charles stood speechless, literally not knowing what defence to make. "Will it be of any use my denying this, sir?" he asked in a pause of the storm.

"Denying it! To me? Does this impudence become you, Charles Baumgarten?"

"It would not become me, sir, if it were true. But—nay, pray hear me for a moment, Dr. Dynevor—it is not true. I declare to you, sir, as truthfully as I can ever speak in this world, that, so far as I am concerned, it is all false. It was not I who did this."

Dr. Dynevor glared at him through his spectacles.

"I did not buy any jewellery, and I did not accept the bill; I was not at the theatre or out of my chambers that night; and I cannot tell who it was that drew the figures on the blotting-pad. I did not know they were there until the Bishop spoke. Do you believe me, sir?"

"Believe you! I believe you to be a rascal, unworthy to remain inside my house. I will trouble you to go out of it."

The Sub-dean rang the bell. "The door for Mr. Charles Baumgarten," he said to the servant.

Charles splashed through the streets in the mud and the rain, for it had turned out a boisterous night, wondering whether he should ever be able to clear himself, and whether the police would be able to fathom the mystery if he called them to his aid.

(To be continued.)

GWEN

By E. M. Alford.

"MAMMA, I wish you would ask Mr. Dallas to coach me up in my arithmetic. I am sure I shall fail in it if you don't."

The girl who was speaking was standing on the rug in front of a cheery fire. She was tall and straight; holding her head high, with a certain youthful imperiousness which was rather attractive. Her hands were clasped loosely before her, and her head was turned towards her mother, who leaned back in a low chair on her right hand.

On the opposite side of the hearth sat a man of some thirty-two summers, with a kind and quietly humorous face; a face to pique the curiosity of an impetuous, enquiring young mind such as this girl's, from the repose of its usual aspect and the latent power of sarcasm in the curves of the well-shaped mouth. Mr. Dallas, for it was he, was mathematical master at the college of which Dr. Ellis, the girl's father, was the head.

"Gwen, you are the most audacious child I know," said Mrs. Ellis, in a pleasing contralto voice, that harmonised with her face and bearing. She was handsomer than her daughter, although there was a certain resemblance between them.

Gwen was not exactly pretty, but there was an undefined charm in the girl's whole appearance, in her attitudes, her movements, her unexpected ways and words. One liked to watch her, rather wondering what would come next: what would be the next youthful enthusiasm which would take possession of her. She seemed the impersonation of young life on the threshold of the unknown and mysterious future.

As her mother spoke in her rich, leisurely tones, Gwen turned her head with a little toss of impatience towards the other occupant of the room.

"You do not think me unreasonable or impertinent, do you, Mr. Dallas? *You* would like me to come out well in the Oxford Local Examination, I'm sure, for the credit of us all. And the boys say you are the best coach in the school."

"The boys are under my authority, Miss Gwen; but you must remember that I shall have no authority over *you*," said Mr. Dallas quietly, looking at her with an amused expression in his grey eyes.

"Then you *will* take me in hand!" exclaimed the girl eagerly. "I am *so* glad. When shall we begin? This afternoon? It is a holiday, and I am sure it does not look tempting for a walk."

"Very well, then. If Mrs. Ellis has no objection I will undertake the Herculean labour," said Mr. Dallas, rising. "Only remember,

Miss Gwen, it is to be real work, and I must have real authority over my pupil while she is under my instruction. Shall we begin at once?"

Mr. Dallas had been ten years a master at Dr. Ellis's school, having come there straight from the University. He had, therefore, known Gwen as a small child in short frocks; and although he sometimes put the prefix "Miss" to her name now, in deference to her sixteen summers, yet the pet abbreviation of "Gwen" slipped out usually without it.

They all called her "Gwen," for she was a great favourite with the whole large household, and Gwendoline would have been far too formal a name for one so bright, frank and unsophisticated: whilst her father, truth to tell, somewhat spoilt his only daughter, crediting her with talents and acquirements beyond her present possession. Gwen's facility in making the most of what she did know, her quick wit and ready sympathy with other people's hobbies, probably mislead him as to the extent of her knowledge. For Gwen was very frank in confessing her own ignorance; only, somehow, nobody believed in any possible stupidity of hers; and when she announced that she was going in for the Oxford Local Examination of course everyone predicted her coming out with honours.

Gwen, too, was sanguine herself, until her bug-bear arithmetic began to dawn upon her as a well-nigh unconquerable fence in the way. A fence, however, which if anyone could help her to clear, it would be Mr. Dallas, she knew. He had such a pleasant way of putting things, and was, moreover, gifted with a keen sense of humour, which always seemed to Gwen, to have a special virtue in clearing away mental cobwebs.

So the two began their new rôle of tutor and pupil on this dull Saturday afternoon, in Gwen's study, a small room adjoining the drawing-room, where she pursued her daily studies with her governess.

II.

"Well, Gwen, where are we to begin?" asked Mr. Dallas, taking one of the two chairs which Gwen had placed at the crimson-covered table. "I must learn the extent of your ignorance as a first step, you know."

"That will be difficult to find, I fear," said Gwen, seating herself rather ruefully beside him, with her books before her. "Of course I know the multiplication table; a parrot could learn that, I suppose; but I don't see any sense in it all. It doesn't interest me in the least."

"But it ought to interest you exceedingly," said Mr. Dallas, with an air of gravity. "Just think of the vast consequences dependent on the incontestable fact that two and two make four. But, you

engaged me as a coach," he added, laughing. "I can allow no word except on the subject in hand, until the hour is up."

So Gwen had perforce to concentrate her mind on the task before her, but her knitted brows showed how difficult she found it, and the little impatient sighs that escaped her were quite pitiful. She looked so white and worried after awhile, that almost unconsciously he took to working out the sums for her, and this grew into a habit with him as the lessons went on.

For they did go on very regularly all through the term. On each half-holiday until the Easter vacation, did Mr. Dallas devote one hour of his precious leisure to his interesting, but by no means promising pupil. And I don't think he begrudged the sacrifice. For if Gwen was dull at figures she was very bright in other ways. Quite surprisingly alive, intellectually, for her age, Mr. Dallas decided.

And so the weeks slipped by, and the beautiful spring afternoons came round, when all nature seemed to invite our students out of doors. And yet both appeared very content to look upon the dainty snow-drops and gay crocuses in the Head-Master's garden, through the diamond-paned windows of Gwen's "den," and to rejoice in the renewed beauty of earth and sky, over the Rule of Three and Practice.

III.

The examination was over, and Gwen felt triumphant. To be sure, the arithmetic paper had bothered her at first, but she had dashed at it bravely, feeling that it was easier for her to take any fortress by storm than by a long and patient siege. So she had got through her paper quickly, and had indulged thereafter in a delicious day-dream, pitying the poor girls around her, who showed by their knitted brows how painfully they were plodding through their questions.

"I hope it is all right," she said to Mr. Dallas, when she met him later in the evening. "Oh, I couldn't give you any account of the paper now," she went on, in reply to a query of his as to its stiffness. "I just went at it headlong, as one would go at an unavoidable five-barred gate; and I think it is all right."

"You should have taken plenty of time over it," said Mr. Dallas, rather anxiously; "sums can't be guessed at, you know, like some other things."

"Oh, well, I think my paper was tolerable," said Gwen. "At any rate, if I had pored over it for all the rest of the time, I don't believe I should have done it one bit better; and I don't see the good of bothering oneself over such dry things as figures more than one can help."

"How often must I remind you of the aim of all education?" exclaimed Mr. Dallas, in a half-humorous tone of exasperation. "Don't you know that it is just the discipline which we all need,

and that if we only do what we like in life, our characters will be worthless?"

"I never meant to waste my life in doing only what I like," said Gwen, hotly. "I mean to try and make the best of it for others. But I thought you allowed that our tastes were given us for guides: and that it is better to make the most of what talents we have than to be trying to force ourselves into other people's places. Only you never *will* give me the least bit of encouragement. I can't think why the boys say you are such a good coach!" exclaimed Gwen, angry tears starting to her eyes, which she hurried away to hide.

Mr. Dallas's impulse was to follow her, and plead for forgiveness. He had not seen the starting tears, or at all risks he would have done so; but something kept him back, and with a suppressed sigh, and a very tender, pitiful look on his kind, clever face, he went his way.

As for Gwen, she hurried into her room, and sitting down before her crimson-covered table, leant her arms upon it and her head upon her arms, and let the tears flow. What had come over her?

IV.

THE school had re-assembled again after the summer vacation, and the whole place was alive once more with the cheerful stir of brisk boy-life. The long vacation had somehow seemed especially long to Gwen this year, and the regular ringings of the school bell for chapel and call-over, and the sight of the cricket-field alive with white-flannelled cricketers, was especially welcome to her. She was eager too for tidings of the result of her examination, which might come any day now, and her pulses beat more quickly at each knock of the postman. The meeting between herself and Mr. Dallas had been very friendly. He had described his Swiss tour, and they had had one of their old friendly chats, though not in Gwen's den, and without any arithmetical interludes.

This was on the first day of term, and on the next afternoon poor Gwen learnt her fate. Alas! her worst fears were realised. In one of the preliminary subjects, arithmetic, she had failed utterly, and in one only, composition, had she attained any extra marks.

On hearing the postman's knock, she had fled to her den, and shut herself in, in a fever of expectancy. Presently she heard her father's step without, and the next moment he opened the door and stood there radiant, with the letter in his hand.

"I thought we would read it together, Gwen," he said, cheerily; and then noticing her white cheeks, he added hastily: "What is it child? are you ill?"

"Oh, papa, suppose I have failed?" gasped Gwen.

"Failed? Nonsense, that is out of the question! Let us see rather, what honours you have won."

And then the fatal missive was opened, and the next moment Gwen had sunk down on a chair by the window-sill, and the small glossy head—generally held so high—was bowed in abject misery, and the slight girlish figure was shaken with sobs.

Angry and indignant as Dr. Ellis was with the examiners, for failing to appreciate his daughter's real merits, he was still more distressed at the desolation of her grief, and strove to comfort her.

"Never mind, Gwen, it is of no real importance," he said, tenderly caressing the girl's bowed head, with a touch that went straight to her heart.

Just then a bell rang, and Dr. Ellis had to hurry off, not sorry to escape. In the corridor he met Mr. Dallas.

"Poor Gwen is in terrible trouble, Dallas," he said, in a shaky voice; "those stupid examiners have not passed her, and I can't say anything to cheer her. Perhaps you might be more successful."

Mr. Dallas went at once to Gwen's room, and as no one responded to his knock, he opened the door and stood on the threshold, with a very tender and wistful expression in his eyes.

Gwen still sat by the window-sill, with her arms resting upon it, and her head bowed upon them, as her father had left her, in an attitude of utter despair.

"I must apologise for coming in unperceived, Miss Gwen," said Mr. Dallas, drawing near, and speaking in his most composed and cheeriest tones. "Dr. Ellis has told me the tidings, but surely there is no need to be so cast down! You are only sixteen, and there is plenty of time to try again. Some of our best life-workers have begun with failure."

But Gwen's head only bent lower, and Mr. Dallas was puzzled how to proceed. His heart was very full of sympathy with his pupil, as he watched the chequered sunlight fall through the diamond-paned window on her bowed head. He grew desperate at last, and said in a voice which was—in spite of himself—rather tremulous with feeling: "Really Gwen you must not take it so to heart; we—who care for you—cannot bear to see you grieve like this. It is your happiness we care for, not any fleeting honours you might have gained. Do you suppose any of us will think less highly of you for your defeat?"

Something in the eager pleading of his tones startled the weeping girl, and enabled her to check her sobs, and raise her tear-stained face in response to his kind words. Resolutely thrusting back her tears she rose, and standing erect by the table, but with her head still bent, she said, rather unsteadily, however:

"It is just the thought of you that troubles me, most of all. To think that I should have wasted so many of your precious holiday hours, and all for this!"

"Wasted!" exclaimed Mr. Dallas. "I am sorry you look upon them in that light. For my own part I consider them some of the

most profitably spent hours of my last term, to say nothing of their pleasantness."

A blush of pleasure spread over Gwen's disfigured face for a moment, and her eyes glistened through the unshed tears, as she said:

"Did you really like it? Was it not a sacrifice after all, to spend those sunny hours shut up with so dull a pupil as myself? Ah! but that is only because you are so good," she went on more dejectedly. "It was a sacrifice all the same, and the worst of it is that I made no sacrifice on my part to meet it. I know it now. I liked our talks, and I *would* talk in spite of all your warnings, and I never really studied hard at the subject at all. You were quite right; I *am* shallow, and conceited, and I *do* follow my own inclinations almost always I fear. Oh! what a hateful sort of character I must be!" sighed the girl, in a tone of most genuine self-contempt.

"I don't think you are really shallow, and I am quite sure you are very honest and true, and not more conceited than we have all conspired to make you," said Mr. Dallas, smiling. "Moreover, you have made an immense stride in your education already, according to your own showing, in the discovery of your short-comings. It takes many people years, some of us even a life-time, to learn this priceless lesson of humility, which you have got by heart so soon. I, for one, shall look up to you with increased respect Miss Gwen, henceforth."

There was no raillery in his tone now, but a quiet earnestness that came like balm to Gwen's wounded spirit. The girl was deeply touched. Her tutor had been somewhat of a hero to her all along, although he had angered her at times by his plain-speaking. But all the more precious was his present encouragement, knowing as she did that it was spoken in good faith. She felt cheered, and responded with almost her old wonted gaiety.

Mr. Dallas, on the contrary, had suddenly grown serious. The boys could not think what had come over their clear-headed master in school that afternoon. He contradicted himself more than once, and answered so beside the mark on one occasion, that a subdued titter went round the class, which, however, was speedily checked.

V.

A THUNDER-BOLT fell on the school next day when a rumour became current that Mr. Dallas intended leaving at the end of the term. A rumour which the frown on the Doctor's face, and the haggard aspect of Mr. Dallas's, seemed to confirm.

No wonder Mr. Dallas looked haggard, for little rest had he known that night During a long country walk the evening before he had thought the matter out, and on his return to the school had gone straight to the Doctor's study and placed his resignation in his hands.

Dr. Ellis, who seemed stunned at first, pleaded with him in vain to remain.

"I shall lose my right hand, Dallas, if I lose you," he had said, and had offered to increase his salary if money were at the root of the matter. And when he found all his pleading useless, he begged him at least to take a night to think it over. But Mr. Dallas was firm.

"I daren't trust myself to a night's consideration of the matter, Dr. Ellis," he said. "You cannot guess what it costs me to leave you all, or how keenly I feel your kindness in wishing to keep me. But I see clearly this is my only right course, and so would you, too, if I could explain. I can't trust myself to speak more on the matter to-night." And with an eager grip of the Doctor's hand he was gone.

But there had been little rest for Mr. Dallas that night. He began to think that he should soon hate figures as much as Gwen herself, so persistently did the refrain "twice sixteen is thirty-two" haunt him during the restless hours of darkness, together with the further fact that an income which suffices for one only will not suffice for two. It seemed a curious comment on his praise of the great fact to Gwen that "two and two make four!"

The terrible tidings of Mr. Dallas's resignation reached Gwen on the afternoon of that day, and was received with indignant disbelief. She begged her mother to ask him in to afternoon tea, that they might hear the denial from his own lips.

"I fear it is too true, Gwen," said her mother. "Your father is terribly upset about it. But we will ask Mr. Dallas to come and have a chat certainly. Maybe we shall be able to shake his resolution."

Mrs. Ellis's drawing-room was a very pretty one, and looked very beguiling this afternoon with Gwen presiding over the dainty tea-table near the fire-place, which was turned into a deliciously cool-looking grotto, by the aid of graceful ferns, and rustic cork, and pieces of mirror representing pools of water, in which the fronds of Hart's-tongue and maiden-hair were reflected. Mrs. Ellis reclined in her usual low chair with some pretty lace work in her hands, and turned a face full of gracious welcome on Mr. Dallas as he entered.

"Gwen and I are all impatience, Mr. Dallas," she said, "to hear from your own lips that you have re-considered your decision of last night, and are going to set all our minds at rest again."

Mr. Dallas took her out-stretched hand silently, and turned to greet Gwen. But that young lady resolutely put her hands behind her, and, glancing down upon him with a sort of imperious indignation, exclaimed:

"I want to hear that you are not going to desert us before I shake hands with you, Mr. Dallas!"

The master smiled, in spite of his soreness of heart, at the girl's attitude, and said quietly:

"Then I am afraid, Miss Gwen, I must submit to your displeasure, for it is, alas, too true!"

"True? and you dare to stand there and tell me so as composedly as if it were just an every-day matter!" exclaimed Gwen with kindling cheeks. "As if my father were nothing to you, or the school, or the boys, or mamma, or me! Oh! I call it mean to throw us all over like this, just for some fad of your own! I should have thought you were too loyal to act so!"

And Gwen resumed her seat from which she had risen at his entrance, and busied herself over the cups of tea.

"What can I say to her, Mrs. Ellis?" said Mr. Dallas, appealing to his hostess for aid. "You must know, all of you, that it is a terrible trial to me to contemplate leaving. It will be the greatest wrench of my life I feel sure. But I also feel sure that it *must* be made."

"In that case, Gwen, I do not see that we have any right to upbraid Mr. Dallas any more," said Mrs. Ellis, struck by the careworn look on her visitor's face, and the unusual gravity of his tones. "He must know his own affairs better than we can, and we have no right to intrude upon them."

Mr. Dallas went across to the tea-table, and said in a voice, whose earnestness startled Gwen, as it had done on the afternoon before when he was trying to comfort her:

"Will you not believe me, Gwen, when I tell you that I *must* go, but that the very thought of it makes me so miserable, that I cannot trust myself to talk about it yet."

She looked up at him then, and held out her hand almost humbly as she answered:

"Of course I believe you. I know you always act from a sense of duty, but yet it is just possible that you may sometimes make a mistake like the rest of us, isn't it?"

"Very possible indeed. Only when one's inclinations pull very strongly in what one believes the wrong direction, one has to beware," he answered, taking a cup of tea to her mother.

When he returned for his own, Gwen spoke again, with evident effort this time, and a painful blush spread over her face as she asked:

"It hasn't anything to do with me and my disgrace, has it? I shouldn't think of asking you to coach me again; and I mean to work so hard, that I really hope I may pass next time."

Mr. Dallas was rather puzzled how to reply, as she glanced up at him with a deprecating look in her face; so assuming a rallying tone, he said:

"What a foolish child you are to talk about disgrace. I thought we had settled that point yesterday."

"I am not a child, and I want to know if it has anything to do with me," persisted Gwen. "Whether I have worried you into going away?"

"You certainly are worrying Mr. Dallas now, Gwen," interposed her mother. "We have all spoilt her, that is the fact, Mr. Dallas," she went on in apology. "I really think it might be a good thing to send her to a boarding-school for a year or two."

"If I go away to school will you remain here?" asked impetuous Gwen, turning full upon him with the unexpected query.

He was not prepared for so direct an attack, and was moreover puzzled as to what he might allow himself to do under such altered conditions. Gwen saw the hesitation, and seized the opportunity.

"I believe he would, mamma," she exclaimed. "If so, I will go at once; next week that is. Miss Metcalfe's school, which you are always extolling so, begins next week. Do let me go."

It was Mrs. Ellis's turn to be surprised now. She glanced from Gwen's flushed face to Mr. Dallas's perturbed one, and then making some excuse to send the girl out of the room, said:

"Of course Gwen has been talking nonsense. I believe the poor child thinks she has brought disgrace on the whole establishment by her failure."

Mr. Dallas looked irresolute for a moment, and then said rather hurriedly:

"After all, I think I must ask your help, Mrs. Ellis. You have always been a kind friend to me, and you will, I know, be as lenient as you can to my folly. The fact is, I was foolish to undertake the office of tutor to Gwen. She had been but as a delightful child to me before; now she has become much more, and preposterous as the idea is, I cannot trust myself to remain under the spell of her presence. Do not think for one moment that I wish to enlist your sympathies on my behalf, except in helping me to make good my retreat. I am not quite so visionary as to dream of ever gaining such a prize as Gwen for my wife. I see all the facts plainly. I am just twice her age. I have only enough income for my own wants, and no prospects in the future even that would warrant me in hoping ever to be a fit husband for her. I would not tie her down to the insignificant lot of a poor school-master's wife if I could—she, who should have such a glorious career. But I would keep myself in working order if possible, and not fail, as I did yesterday afternoon, in just the ordinary school routine."

Mrs. Ellis had been listening eagerly, her work fell idly on her lap, and her eyes were fixed on the grave and troubled face of the speaker. But she had no time for any but the shortest reply, as Gwen was turning the handle of the door.

"Thank you for your confidence," the girl heard her mother say as she entered. "And now won't you let Gwen refill your cup?"

But Mr. Dallas declined, and took his leave instead, saying he meant to indulge in a country walk to try and get rid of the cobwebs.

"But what about my going to school, mamma?" queried Gwen as the door closed behind him.

"I am not sure but that it would be a good plan, my child. You are really grown up now, and two years of school-life might not be amiss. I must talk to your father about it."

"Then Mr. Dallas's going has something to do with me! Oh, mother, how can *I* have sent him away?" exclaimed the girl, in such evident distress that her mother felt sorely tempted to sooth her hurt feelings with some glimmer of the truth; but all she allowed herself to say was:

"Mr. Dallas has only too high an opinion of you, child. I hope you won't forfeit it by interfering unduly in his affairs."

And this combined encouragement and rebuke effectively silenced Gwen.

VI.

It was no slight sacrifice which Gwen made in volunteering to go to a boarding-school, and although she had never felt less like a heroine than as she settled herself into a corner of the railway carriage, yet, perhaps, she had never been nearer acting a heroic part. For the idea had been taken up by Dr. Ellis as a good one, and in a few days the whole matter had been arranged.

As she gazed listlessly at the peaceful meadows from her carriage corner, looking so smiling in the afternoon sunshine, a great longing came over her to be back in her beloved den, with the cheery sounds of school-life around her, and the familiar tones of her tutor's voice recalling her wandering thoughts to those "odious figures." But then a revulsion came suddenly over her, she brushed away the tears, and threw her head with a gesture of defiance, as she said to herself:

"I will work hard and conquer them yet. He shall respect me at least, and not find all his patient labour thrown away."

And Gwen kept her resolve, and worked so well during the three years of school-life that followed, that she was able to go in for and pass the Oxford Local Examinations, with credit to herself and to her school, which became in time quite proud of her, as one of its most hopeful pupils. Great was the pleasure which her father's delight in her successes gave her, but the secret ambition of her heart remained unsatisfied. Something withheld her from mentioning Mr. Dallas's name in her letters home, and after her father's intimation in his first note to her that Mr. Dallas had kindly consented to stay on, his name had been conspicuous only by its absence. Nor had she any chance of personally testing his interest in her successes, as Miss Metcalfe always arranged for her return home just a day after the college break-up, and eagerly as she looked for her tutor's familiar figure as her cab drove up to her father's door, it was always in vain.

"I believe he must do it on purpose, and I call it rather unkind, when I have really been trying so hard to do him credit at last," she would say to herself with a sigh.

But whatever Gwen might feel on the subject, she kept it most scrupulously to herself, and neither her father nor mother guessed at her disappointment. Neither did they trouble themselves much more about Mr. Dallas's sudden resolve and as sudden alteration. Mrs. Ellis had, indeed, told her husband of his hurried confidence, and they had agreed that it would be better not to mention him much in their letters to Gwen, and to ask Miss Metcalfe to time Gwen's return after the college break-up day. But there the matter had dropped, and had become so entirely a thing of the past that neither of them foresaw any difficulty in Gwen's final return home now, as a finished young lady, at the sedate age of nineteen. And even had they still retained any misgivings, there would seem no need to trouble about it any more, as Mr. Dallas had applied for the Head-Mastership of the Grammar School at G——, and Dr. Ellis little doubted that he would get it, so good were his testimonials and so high his degree. And although he still dreaded losing him, yet Gwen's approaching return reconciled him somewhat to the prospect of his loss.

It was a lovely June afternoon as the train, which was carrying many happy hearts homewards, stopped at a busy station and deposited amongst other passengers, a tall, stately girl, noticeable even amid the throng, for the bright youthfulness of her whole appearance, the poise of her head, and the beaming look of anticipation on her face.

"No one has come to meet me. Ah! then I shall arrive before my letter. What fun! How surprised they will be to see me a week before the time! Let me see, it is a half-holiday. The boys will be playing cricket: how I should love to go down amongst them! I don't feel a bit like a grown-up young lady. How fortunate for me that Miss Metcalfe should have felt it necessary to close her school earlier for fear of the epidemic that was spreading all around us. Now I shall be in time to see the boys and all of them," said Gwen to herself, a blush spreading over her face as she thus vaguely concluded her self-communings.

Yes, the boys were at cricket in the big field; and Gwen leant forward eagerly in her open cab as it drove around the gravel sweep, searching for a familiar form. And even as she did so her eyes encountered a pair of grey eyes fixed in surprised admiration upon her. Mr. Dallas was inside the field, leaning upon the railings, and talking with another master who was standing on the gravel without. Suddenly the sound of wheels attracted his attention, and looking up carelessly, he was transfixed by the apparition of Gwen in all her fresh fascination. The blush was still upon her cheek, the light of eager expectancy in her eyes. To Mr. Dallas's bewildered brain she looked like some beautiful impersonation of youth, something altogether above and beyond this work-a-day world, in her pure loveliness. Not that Gwen was strictly speaking lovely, but in his eyes she

was something much more than that, the very type of gracious womanhood. And, truly, in her simple but dainty summer attire, and with that rose-tint on her face, and her eyes shining with intense happiness, she was a sight to gladden a weary man's heart.

"Stop, driver!" she cried eagerly. And springing out of the carriage went straight across to the railings, and holding out her neatly-gloved hand to her tutor, exclaimed:

"I'm so glad I am in time to see you all. How delightful the dear old place looks. Oh, I think it almost repays one for the banishment to come back and find it all the same."

And then she turned and shook hands with the other master, thus giving Mr. Dallas time to recover his self-possession, which, for the moment, he had lost utterly. However, with a desperate effort, he summoned his wits about him and said, as he lightly vaulted the railings and stood beside her:

"It is very good of you to come back to us with such kind words, but I feel quite ashamed to be caught in this bad form. Had we known, we would have given you a better reception."

"And what better reception could I have than to find you all like this?" said Gwen, with a wonderfully thrilling tone in her voice. "Don't I love this dear old cricket-field next best to my own den? And have I not been almost wishing that I were a boy as I came along, that I might go down and take my turn at the bat? But I mustn't stay gossiping here, when I've not even set eyes on my father and mother yet."

"They are not at home. What could have induced you to come back like this without even sending a line?"

"I did send a line, Mr. Mentor, so you need not begin to scold me as of old. And there it comes, just in time to save my character," she exclaimed, as the afternoon postman turned the angle of the house.

Gwen and Mr. Dallas were slowly sauntering up to the door, where the cab with Gwen's boxes awaited her orders; the other master—a comparatively slight acquaintance of hers—had lifted his hat and departed. What a stir and bustle there was among the servants when Miss Gwen's sudden arrival became known, and what lamentations about master and mistress having gone out to afternoon tea at a distant country rectory! But Gwen took it all very calmly; she ordered tea in the drawing-room, and insisted on Mr. Dallas taking it with her.

"I am not fit to sit down with you, Miss Gwen," said the tutor, surveying himself ruefully in the long mirror beside the elegant young lady who was laying her commands upon him.

"What nonsense!" exclaimed the girl. "As if it mattered a scrap what coat you have on, when you are just Mr. Dallas all the same. However, I will allow you five minutes to wash your hands, if it will make you feel more satisfied. Only five minutes, mind," she

insisted, looking back at him from over her shoulder as she went off to her own room. "I am famished for want of my tea, and I won't begin till you come."

A very cheerful tea-drinking was that in Mrs. Ellis's pretty drawing-room on this bright afternoon. Gwen's spirits were contagious, and Mr. Dallas threw off for the time all dreary forecastings of the future, which looked so overpoweringly dark to him, in the glow of the present sunshine. For the time, however, he would bask in the sunshine and be thankful for it, he resolved, as he sat in a low chair by Gwen's tea-table, and listened to her eager flow of talk and was waited upon by her dainty fingers.

They were still chatting over their tea on the old easy footing of tutor and pupil, discussing Gwen's conquest of her difficulties, the books she had been reading, and the new ideas that were just now uppermost in her busy brain, when Dr. and Mrs. Ellis returned.

After the first startled queries as to her sudden appearance had been satisfactorily answered, and the first warm greetings exchanged, Dr. Ellis turned to Mr. Dallas and, holding out a letter, said:

"This came for you by the afternoon post, Dallas, together with Gwen's announcement of her coming home. I hardly know whether to wish you tidings of success in it or not."

Mr. Dallas took the letter silently, and Gwen watched his face curiously as he read.

VII.

"Well, what news?" asked Dr. Ellis, cheerily, as Mr. Dallas bent his knitted brows over his letter. "You don't look greatly charmed."

"And yet I have gained the appointment," replied Mr. Dallas, handing Dr. Ellis the letter with a very rueful face.

"What appointment?" asked Gwen, looking startled.

"The Head-Mastership of the Grammar School at G——," replied her father. "And I must say he is an ungrateful fellow to be so little pleased at the handsome way in which the important post is offered to him. May Gwen see the letter, Dallas? She will be pleased at her tutor's success."

"Certainly, if she cares to read it," replied Mr. Dallas, in a tone of assumed indifference.

Gwen read, with glowing cheeks and kindling eyes, the warm terms of appreciation in which the appointment was offered to her tutor; but she handed him back the letter with an indifference as studied as his own, saying some formal words of congratulation as she did so. All the girlish gaiety of a few minutes before seemed suddenly exchanged for the dignified reserve of a grown-up young lady; nor did she unbend again whilst Mr. Dallas was in the room. He could not understand her quick transition of manner towards himself, and pondered over it more deeply than he had ever pondered any abstruse problem of mathematics. And Gwen maintained this reserve during

the succeeding days, till he could almost fancy that her bright home-coming and that too-delightful tête-à-tête tea-drinking had been but a wonderful dream.

Her mother even noticed her reserve towards her former friend, and expostulated with her.

"I don't think you are quite kind to Mr. Dallas, Gwen," she said on the day before the school broke up. "We could not expect a man of his abilities always to remain with us as an under master, and he is evidently depressed about leaving us. I believe it was partly out of consideration for your father that he has remained on so long, and I for one, feel grateful to him."

"Oh! yes, of course, we all know he is a paragon of unselfishness," exclaimed Gwen, petulantly. "But do you know, mother, I am afraid I am beginning to hate paragons. Don't look so shocked, dear; I don't quite hate Mr. Dallas; but I don't feel like talking amiably about him just now."

Then, without awaiting a reply, Gwen hurried off, and snatching her garden-hat from a peg in the hall, fled to her favourite resort, a certain shrubbery walk skirting the cricket-field. Swiftly she hurried on till a rustic seat was gained, screened by a rough trellis work, over which the boys had trained a luxuriant sweet-briar bush.

Here Gwen sat down in a very forlorn state of mind. Life looked very blank to her just now, in spite of the blue sky, the sweet scents, the dainty beauty of the briar blossoms, and the shouts and laughter of the boys in the field close at hand. Everybody seemed happy but herself.

"The place will be deserted in a few hours, and what do they care?" said Gwen to herself, leaning back in her corner, and trying indignantly to keep back the tears that would rise in her eyes.

Perhaps the said tears prevented her seeing some one approach, for as she almost angrily wiped them away, she was startled to find Mr. Dallas himself standing in the pathway in front of her retreat.

"Gwen," he exclaimed, anxiously, "what is the matter? Has anything vexed you? No clouds should cross such a sunny sky as yours. We older ones are more used to them, and can bear our burdens better."

"My sky is anything but sunny," replied Gwen, lifting her eyes reproachfully to his. "How can it be, when everyone is so heartless and indifferent; going away and leaving us deserted, without any regret? Just listen to the boys' voices, how full of triumph they are at the thought of to-morrow. I call it a horrid, ungrateful world."

And Gwen threw a glance of defiance at her tutor as she spoke.

"You can't expect boys to be miserable at the thought of going home. Were you miserable when you came back a week ago?" asked Mr. Dallas, seating himself by Gwen's side.

"No," replied the girl, turning away her face and plucking a piece of sweet-briar by her side; "everything seemed bright and delightful

then, but now all is changed. And I call it unkind of you to go away and make the whole thing different. I daresay we shall have a prig of a second master, whom the boys will hate and whom we shall none of us care a scrap for," burst out Gwen, all the dignity of the past few days suddenly giving way, and the pent-up bitterness and disappointment finding vent at last.

"Gwen, shall I tell you why I decided to go?" asked Mr. Dallas, gravely. "Will you promise not to be very angry with me if I tell you the truth?"

"I don't think I shall be much more angry than I am now," said Gwen. "Of course I know you deserve a better position as mamma says, and that it is only out of kindness you have stayed so long. Still I do call it unkind to go just as I have come home, and after I have worked so hard too to do you credit. It isn't as if I had failed again," protested Gwen, with flushed cheeks.

"Did you really think of me, Gwen, whilst you were away? And is it possible that the thought of a prosy middle-aged schoolmaster could have acted as a spur to you in your bright beautiful youth? Don't beguile me with any false hopes, Gwen. I have fought so hard all these years to conquer my presumptuous love, in vain. The first sight of you last week, overturned all my hardly-earned stoicism and common sense. I could not go on seeing you, Gwen, from day to day, and yet keep my sober sense. The truth would force itself out as it does now, against my better judgment. Now you know why I decided to go three summers ago, and why it is still more my duty to go now. Don't be very angry, Gwen. I do not ask for your love; I only tell the truth, and ask your pardon for daring to tell it."

Mr. Dallas had spoken eagerly, carried beyond his usual self-restraint, and he leant forward now, trying anxiously to read the face beside him. But Gwen's wonted self-possession had quite forsaken her. She still kept her face averted, but surely the fingers which held the sweet-briar spray were trembling, and could those be tears stealing from beneath the down-cast lashes?

"Gwen, why do you not speak. Have I vexed you by my foolish words?" asked the tutor, perplexed by the girl's silence and evident emotion.

"I don't think they were foolish at all," said Gwen, in a very unsteady voice. "And—and—you said you did not ask me for my love; so what can I say?"

"I dared not. It would be too presumptuous. Ah! Gwen, you have had your revenge upon me a hundred-fold for my boasted pride in your 'odious' figures. 'Twice sixteen is thirty-two' has weighed more heavily on my heart than any sum ever worried your pretty head! It would not be fair to ask you to sacrifice your beautiful youth to a man nearly double your age, with only the dull career of a schoolmaster's life before him."

"Now you are talking nonsense," said Gwen, suddenly rising and

confronting him with brilliant cheeks and shining eyes. "As it it could matter whether you were thirty-five or eighty-five or one hundred and five, as long as you were Mr. Dallas and I was just Gwen! I always thought figures stupid things, but I never guessed that they could be stupid enough to part real friends!"

What happened upon this outburst of Gwen's we will leave our readers to imagine. Suffice it to say that an hour after Dr. Ellis met his daughter and his favourite master coming towards him across the lawn in a state of idyllic bliss, Gwen's face radiant, and Mr. Dallas's wearing an expression of almost boyish delight.

"He is not going after all, papa; I have bribed him to stay with this sprig of sweetbriar," said Gwen, slipping away and leaving her hero to tell the wonderful tale of their love.

After listening calmly to all Mr. Dallas had to say, the Head-Master heaved a sigh as he remarked: "It is the old story, Dallas, of the rising and setting sun. I was Gwen's hero once, but I must be content to play second fiddle for the future."

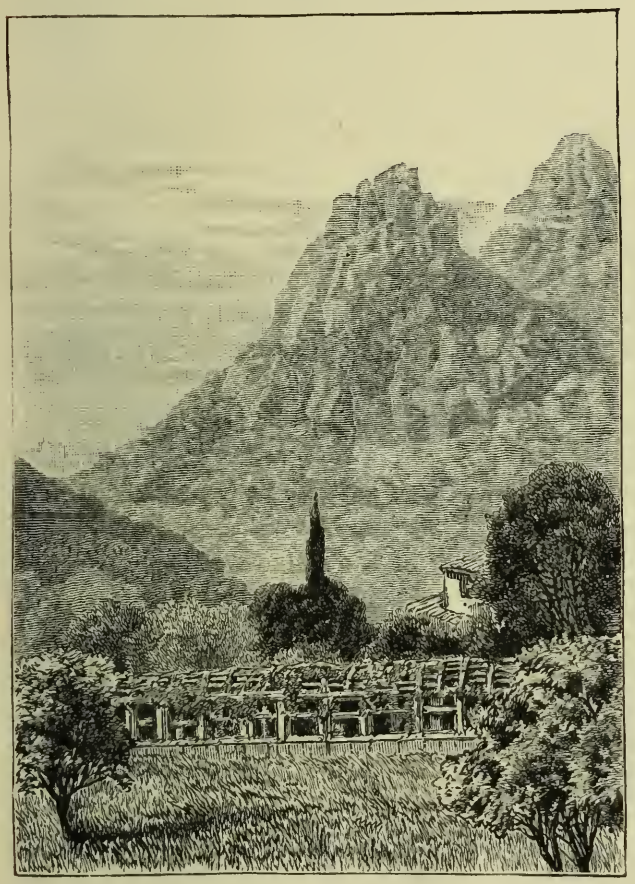
"She will not think of leaving you, sir; we have talked it all over," said Mr. Dallas, not noticing how the father winced at that "we." "I shall decline this new appointment, and ask you to let me remain on as I am for the present. And perhaps, eventually, you might let me furnish the unused wing of the College, so that when Gwen does leave you it will be only for another home under the same roof."

"Well, that is not a bad idea," said Dr. Ellis, "but I must have time to think it over. You young people are so impetuous; it nearly takes one's breath away."

With which gentle sarcasm, the Doctor went off to talk the matter over with his wife.

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Under Northern Skies," etc., etc.



On the Road to Soller.

Soller, Nov., 1886.

My Dear E.—The days pass tranquilly in this Island of Mallorca, and give to our lives an even tenour that is infinitely refreshing. We have just sufficient variety and excitement to prevent monotony from taking possession of our camp. As for dullness—no man ought to be dull who has any internal resource to fall back upon. Much less would it be excusable where there are two to drive away those fumes and phantasms which occasionally gather about one's brains when travelling alone in distant lands.

We cannot always command our moods. Solitude, so often a necessity, at times becomes an insupportable burden. The reality of life, with the weight and woe of its errand, suddenly becomes overwhelming. The why and the wherefore: things that are wrong and might have been right: what is, as compared with what might have been: the sense of the inevitable: the mystery of those tangled skeins which make up our existence, and which no earthly power can ever separate and straighten: we all have these experiences, and in certain moments they come over us with a rush that paralyses our whole mental structure, and lands us in despair. In these moments, if left to ourselves, we should quietly disappear from the world and so find a solution to all our problems, though, it may be, not rest unto our souls. But our good genius

steps in, and the mood passes, and we return to our life clothed and in our right mind, and ready once more for battle.

But all this does not apply to our life in Mallorca. Here we have many resources, and no time to think upon metaphysics or the philosophy of life. We take photographs, and come out, as you have seen, without our heads: a mystery neither metaphysical nor philosophical, but scientific or psychical. H. C. sketches occasionally with great ardour, and I send you the result. More often he writes poetry, and then I spare you. We compare things and people, and fall into wise moods, which are so short-lived that we console ourselves with the old aphorism that great minds must sometimes unbend. We need a great deal of unbending, for it is our normal condition. We have only one subject for regret: it lies in that Eastern saying: "This also must pass away." Les jours se suivent, les heures sonnent. One day finds us in Palma, the next at the very ends of this beautiful little island. But it is all so small that we do everything leisurely. There is no undue rushing about, no unnecessary wear and tear of nervous tissue. All goes smoothly: all is merry as a marriage bell.

A bad comparison, by the way, for the bells here cannot be merry; they are cracked and tinny, and sound takes the place of melody. They begin the first thing in the morning. You are awakened from dreams of paradise to the furious din of a pandemonium. It is only possible to suppose that the bells in Palma have suddenly all gone mad—a raging madness in which there is no silence of melancholy whatever. The air is full of startling sounds—horrible, exasperating, yet so absurd that you laugh. The servants who are dévotes flock to church and cathedral and go through their matins. They tell their beads, and probably the while are thinking of the domestic duties of the day, and the bargains they are about to make in the market-place. I fancy that wandering thoughts are not regarded in the light of a grave fault; or if they are, the priest will absolve them. What can they tell in their hours of confession? For my own part, I should not know where to begin or end, what to say or what to leave unsaid. It is difficult enough to post up one's diary at the end of the day—those who keep diaries: I have never found it possible; any more than I have ever found it possible to make a single note of any place I ever visited—but to carry one's memory through a month's small sins seems to me a labour that should in itself at once atone for them all.

After telling their beads, the women flock to the market, and the early hour of seven is about the busiest of the day. Here loud voices take the place of the now silent bells. One hardly knows which of the two is the more unpleasant—the noise of the bells or the voices of the women. I have never heard such voices—out of Germany—as these Mallorquins and Mallorquinas possess. They are loud, harsh and grating. Men and women shout at you and at

each other just as if the sense of hearing had no existence, or at best a very distant one. They would almost raise the dead. Often I have to fly, or I know that something terrible would happen. Nothing in this island is soft and musical, except, perhaps, the voices of the frogs; and they, in comparison with their English species, have that excellent thing even in frog-land, a voice sweet and low.

SOLLER.

In my letter to-day, I have to introduce you to a new part of the island, where frogs abound, so that the topic is somewhat apropos. It is well when one subject leads up to another, so that by a series of mental evolutions, as it were, the links in the chain of one's narrative fit into each other "with a smooth result."

Soller, this new part of the island, is one of the most fertile and most beautiful. There is no railway to Soller, and once more we had recourse to the dignified and lordly barouche.

I should like you to see us starting on one of these expeditions. Our seat is so perched up that in getting in and out of the carriage it is quite unnecessary to open the door. We step gracefully over it, and thereby save time and trouble. H. C., it is true, now and then forgets his long legs, catches his foot in the woodwork, and the next moment lies sprawling in the dust. But we like these little diversions: at least, I find them amusing—when they happen to H. C. He bears them with the calmness of a great mind, and rising from these falls with a blank and serene expression, gives vent to his emotions in the sublimity of blank verse.

We started for Soller one fine morning. The barouche came round, decked out with clean brown holland covers in our special honour. Of course a small crowd collected, also in our honour. From every window in the fonda a head looked out; from some windows two or three heads. We had been carefully packed up by Francisco. Paolo, our coachman, sat on his box, immovable as a marble image, impenetrable as a sphinx. His features might have been carved in wood. To-day he had nothing to do but to drive us. Fish, flesh, fowl and fruit, forty-eight eggs, or a hundred and forty-eight if necessary—everything would be found in abundance at the Soller fonda.

A. and B. came down to see us off, and wish us bon voyage. I have already referred to them. You will perhaps remember that they crossed over with us from Barcelona. I have also mentioned that it was A.'s second visit to Mallorca, though I have never been indiscreet enough to ask him what mesmeric influence brought him once more to these sunny shores. They intended to follow us to Soller in a couple of days.

"I think," said A., looking at me with a very straightforward and innocent gaze, "we had better arrange not all four to stay at the same fonda. Their resources are limited, don't you know. There are two fondas in Soller. There is the Fonda del Pastor, and there is the other fonda. I always stay at the Fonda del Pastor. The other is the better. I advise you to stay at the other. It gives me much pleasure to think that you will be more comfortable than ourselves."

This was very charming. Here was the true spirit of philanthropy and self-sacrifice—found in the world about as often as the blossom of the flowering aloe, which comes out once in a hundred years, and dies in a night.

"You have a beautiful spirit," I replied, "and deserve canonising. I feel greatly refreshed and upheld by this exhibition of disinterestedness. Can you tell me who waits upon us at the other fonda?"

"Oh yes," replied A., looking at me more frankly than ever. "A very charming old woman. Quite a beautiful picture of an old woman. She cannot be more than eighty, but she is very brisk, and you will have the benefit of her long experience. Capital cook, too."

"Delightful!" I returned. "Nothing could be better. And who waits upon you at the Fonda del Pastor?"

"Oh, two very inexperienced sort of girls," replied A., withdrawing his beautifully frank gaze, and studying his boots. "Young sort of things, very foolish and unsophisticated, the daughters of the landlord; not at all up to the mark of the old woman at the other fonda."

"Are they pretty?" asked H. C., very irrelevantly, as I thought. What could it matter to him whether they were pretty or plain? Why will people ask unnecessary and stupid questions? But some people are always asking questions, and a very great part of English conversation consists of questions and answers.

"That is a matter of taste," replied A. "They are soft and cooing—to their father and mother, I mean," he added hastily, with a strong flush. "I prefer the severe and the majestic. I have never yet met with my ideal. I never expect to do so."

"A sort of female Colossus of Rhodes," said H. C. "That is a very fine sentiment. I agree with you. How beautiful it would be to rise to the grandeur of such a subject in the sublimity of an epic poem, for example."

"You will find the old woman at the other fonda much more inspiring," replied A., somewhat anxiously. "Allow me to direct your coachman, so that there may be no mistake."

After all this care you will be surprised to hear that in the end—I don't know how the confusion came about—a mistake did occur, and we actually descended at the Fonda del Pastor. It was all the fault of that stupid coachman, I am persuaded, whose brains are composed of nothing but cotton wool.

Away we dashed, with that aristocratic rumble which is as unmistakable in its way as the call of the night watchman, or the cry of the screech owl that so often startles the silence of these Palma nights.

Away we dashed, I say, under the now leafless plane trees of the Rambla, and out by the railway station. All this was familiar ground, and for some time we followed the road which led to Miramar. Then we branched off to the right. Far ahead of us stretched the hills, and we were about to go over the highest pass in the island. In climbing the heights of Valldemosa, you will remember that we had encountered that tremendous storm; to-day we were favoured with cloudless skies.

Whatever Paolo's faults, he is a capital driver, and does not spare his cattle. The long, straight road at length came to an end, and we began to ascend the windings of the pass. Soon we were looking behind us into a fair and fertile valley and luxuriant plains. At the commencement of the zigzags we found a charming house with a long avenue of cypress trees enclosed in fine gates of wrought iron. Within great walls were groves of orange and lemon trees, mingling

their rich foliage with that of the pale, sadder green of the olive. It was a small fertile paradise.

We ascended into the mountains. The hills stood out magnificently, in many chains, more cultivated and luxuriant than the heights of Miramar. Behind us, far away, stretched the great plains of Palma, the cathedral rising conspicuously above the town. Beyond all this, the blue waters of the Mediterranean, sleeping and placid,

THE PLAINS OF SOLLER.

mingled with the sky, and all melted into one far-off vision of repose and beauty.

It was a fine piece of engineering skill, this zigzag road. We left our lordly barouche to make its winding way upwards, and pursued a more direct course over roadside banks and walls. It was impossible not to be excited by all this grandeur of country, and fortunately we both see with the same eyes and enthusiasm, and both worship beauty in its highest forms. For what could be more dispiriting than to have all your animation and appreciation met by a tame and shadowy response? How it puts you off and throws you back upon yourself; and how infinitely preferable would solitude be to this. Happily H. C.'s emotions quite equal my own, and the

one is never very much behind the other. But he goes yet further; for whilst I discreetly confine my adoration to hills and valleys and the beauties of still life, he, as you have not failed to gather, wastes much time in a vain worship and contemplation of fair Mallorquinas; especially in their attitudes of devotion, when he becomes, as it were, a silent postulant at the shrine of their hearts and affections. Here, it seems to me, we have a poetical phrase quite worthy of the subject. It is somewhat far-fetched, perhaps, but, I hope, not involved. Let it stand.

We reached the extreme height, and on one side looked down into the Valley of Soller, on the other into the distant plain of Palma with its boundaries of sea and sky. We had now to descend the zigzag on the Soller side. Before us, far off, low down, small and indistinct, nestling in the plain, under the shadow of a great and high hill, reposed the town. Yet one could scarcely call it a plain. Soller is so surrounded and shut in by hills that it may be said to sleep in the hollow of a basin. This makes it extremely enervating and depressing, and many of its inhabitants look pale and sickly. Not a few die of consumption.

At the top of the zigzag on our downward route we passed a lovely old cross: one of the many crosses one finds here and there all over the island. This is one of the best, and dates back some centuries, but it has met with reverses and is by no means perfect. As we descended we looked into quite a narrow gorge, full of luxuriant beauty. We are now in the orange district of Mallorca par excellence. The slopes were crowded with these lovely trees, all bearing their graceful fruit. It was not yet ripe, yet sufficiently so to be tempting. So thought H. C. who reaching over the wall after stolen goods, all but overbalanced and came to a bad end.

I must, however, tell you, that to pluck fruit as you go along by the road side, is not only permitted, but desired. So I have been informed, and as I occasionally give way to the temptation, I wish to believe it. The fruit, indeed, is exquisite. The scent of the orange perfumes the air; a perfume more delicious than anything we know of in England. Some of the oranges are lying upon the ground, and these we not only look upon as windfalls and legitimate booty, but they are also the best. The ripe apples, you know, fall in the orchard; and what is true of apples is equally so of oranges.

We went downwards, until at length we found ourselves shut in by the hills of Soller. Nothing can be more beautiful and striking than the situation of the little town. If, indeed, it has a fault, it is that it is too closed in and confined by these towering heights. They give you a sense of suffocation: a sort of strait-waistcoat sensation—as far as one can realize what one has never experienced: for although, no doubt, like the rest of the world, I have often needed the restraining influence, it has never been applied.

Everyone, they say, is mad upon some point; I fear that most of us are mad upon a great many.

The little town itself is wonderfully picturesque: certainly more so than any other town in Mallorca. It is the beauty of age and decay. It looks as old as the hills themselves: nay, older; for these ever renew their youth, and are as juvenile and fresh to-day as when the first upheaval of nature gave them birth. But the town of Soller is grey, ancient and delapidated in appearance, if not in fact.

A stream runs through the town crossed by quaint bridges. On either side you have the wonderful old houses full of life and animation: the short and simple annals of daily existence. The stream has run shallow, waiting for the rains which will not come until the turn of the year. The stony bed is partly exposed and looks athirst. Some months ago the swollen stream brought down and washed away a great deal of the walls on either side, and as they have not been restored one looks upon a picture of devastation and ruin—a ruin, however, for which no one is much the worse.

Into all this lovely scene we rolled and rumbled in our lordly barouche, scattering wonder and astonishment in our path. It was not a royal progress this time, and H. C. did not bow right and left. In fact, he was evidently anxious and preoccupied, and I saw a look pass between him and the coachman which I could not quite fathom; but being the most unsuspicious of mortals I thought nothing of it. We can only understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare that is within us. We judge others by ourselves. It is useless to talk about the wisdom of the serpent if we possess only the harmlessness of the dove. Therefore I never suspected H. C. of anything in the way of plotting and planning. So much innocence of intention and guilelessness of character are beautiful traits in this advanced age.

We rumbled and rolled through the narrow streets, and the people flocked and stared. The lordly barouche seldom pays them a visit. Those who journey to Soller usually make use of the diligence. It is a most uncomfortable vehicle, without springs, heavily laden; shakes you to pieces, cramps your legs, and breaks your back. Soller ladies get in with their umbrellas, which they begin by planting firmly upon your toes; Soller men crush you up into nothing, and suffocate you with an odour of stale tobacco and garlic. I have gone through it all in other places.

The people of Soller stared; the little children shouted and hurrahed; but it was all curiosity, not the respect we generally meet with. Soller is radical, and would like to turn the world upside down, themselves uppermost, of course. The barouche was an object of envy to them, not awe inspiring. Why should we travel by carriage when they could only travel by diligence? This was the key-note to their character. However, it was a change, and we rather enjoyed it.

"I am anxious to see the beautiful old lady," said H. C.— hypo-

critically, as I afterwards discovered. "I think she will make a charming sketch."

I looked at him for a moment, but was disarmed by his innocent air. "I should have thought the girls at the Fonda del Pastor almost a prettier subject," I remarked; "but I am no judge."

"The old woman will be more pathetic," said H. C., "and pathos is everything. With this wonderful old-world town, this ancient influence and atmosphere, we shall be able to compose one of those weird, solemn, gloomy effects—one of those 'lux in tenebræ' compositions that Israels so much delights in and Rembrandt has immortalised. I feel that we shall do something that will raise our fame and hand us down to posterity. We shall find ourselves on the line in next year's Academy. Don't you feel very enthusiastic?"

I felt very bewildered, which was just the effect he wanted to produce. In the midst of it, we drew up to the door of the fonda: the other fonda, I concluded. It was not a very inviting place, but one must not always judge by outward appearances. It had the look of a very fourth-rate café. One sees hundreds of such places in Paris, and would as soon think of entering them as of putting to sea in a fire-engine. The door was open, and disclosed sundry chairs and tables, a distant bar, and a mysterious object that was rolling round and round apparently without hands, and seemed made for the express purpose of crushing dead men's bones. An instrument of torture, no doubt.

An old man came forward.

"We are all right—the old woman's husband," said H. C., hastily proceeding to hand out some of our traps.

"But A. said nothing about a husband," I remonstrated. "I somehow fancy we have come to the wrong place."

"Not at all," replied H. C. "The old woman naturally has a husband, and here he is. Very decent looking old man."

In we went.

"Mariquitarosita!" the old man called out stentorially, "come down at once."

"Mariquitarosita!" I exclaimed. "What a long name for an old woman—and how curious! Sounds romantic. Capital title for a poem, H. C."

"Excellent," he replied. "The place is brimful of subject and suggestion. I am charmed." And he skipped gracefully into the room with a hornpipe step.

Here an old lady appeared—*the* old lady, we concluded—and H. C. dropped the hornpipe. But instead of being eighty, she couldn't have been sixty. And instead of coming down, she issued upwards, from lower regions. I thought A. had greatly exaggerated her charms. In fact, I felt altogether in a somewhat topsy-turvy condition.

The old man led the way upstairs, and we found the rooms a great

improvement upon those below. Here, also, to my astonishment, we came upon two very pretty and modest girls, neatly dressed, with handkerchiefs becomingly adjusted about the head. H. C. looked somewhat confusedly at me out of the corners of his eyes, but even now the truth did not penetrate to my slow brain.

"Mariquitarosita," explained the old man. "My daughters. Children, do your best for these gentlemen, distinguished visitors from the great England."

"But there must be some mistake," I said, a glimmer of light penetrating to my obscure mental vision. "Is this the Fonda del Pastor?"

"Si, senor," replied the old man. "No mistake."

I began to suspect foul play. "H. C.," said I, "is this your doing?"

Silence met me. I turned. H. C. had disappeared. I now felt that I had been tricked, imposed upon. I went on and found H. C. unpacking at a furious rate.

"Have you had a hand in this matter?" I asked.

"I have a hand in this bag," returned H. C., diving down and bringing out a sketch-book. "I haven't a hand in anything else. This is an unfortunate mistake of the coachman's. He is horribly stupid, you know: cottony-woolly."

"But what about A. and B.?" I went on. "We agreed not to go to the same fonda, you remember."

"Well, they can go to the other fonda. I shall be delighted to feel that they are more comfortably lodged in Soller than we are. They will have the benefit of the old lady's experience. We will put up with the gaucheries of these unsophisticated girls."

I found there was nothing to be done but to make the best of it. So hastily scribbling a note to A. explaining the mistake, and begging him to make use of the other fonda, we entrusted it to the coachman, who was about to start on his return journey.

"You'll see," said H. C. "They'll do nothing of the kind. They'll come here. It's all bosh about the limited resources of the inn. It would accommodate a small army. My firm opinion is that they wanted the place all to themselves, and their beautiful spirit of philanthropy was sheer selfishness. There!" cried H. C., getting quite excited, "now the cat's out of the bag. I've put my foot into it, but I can't help it."

We very soon found out that the long and incomprehensible name was in reality two names, shared by the girls. One is Mariquita, the other Rosita. The one is as shy and timid as a gazelle, very soft and gentle in her ways. Her pretty eyes are the colour of tea, and there is a soft haze over them, something like the tea veiled by the ascending steam. The effect is curious and charming. Mariquita has never left her mother's side, never been out of the island. One never hears her voice, and if you ask her for anything, she brings it

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you with a little appealing, modest manner that, H. C. says, is extremely winning.

Rosita, on the contrary, is much more a woman of the world. She is not in the least bold or forward: very far from it; but she is evidently born to command in her small sphere. She has seen something of the world, too. Has travelled about Spain with her father, through France; even knows something of Paris. This gives her confidence, and she goes about her work with the certainty of doing the right thing. Like Mariquita, she is dark, but somewhat smaller. Her profile is well cut, and her voice has a slightly pathetic cadence, which H. C. says gives him a curious thrill at the heart. I have never experienced this sort of thing, and don't quite know what he means. I wonder whether it indicates any weakness or disease of that organ? If so, I should think he ought to live a very emotionless life, and give up writing poetry.

First impressions, I have said, ought not always to be trusted, and, on the whole, we are very comfortable in this Fonda del Pastor. At first we feared we should have to take our meals in the room we first entered, which is nothing but a large bar with a stone floor. Men come in and sit down, and smoke bad tobacco, and drink beer or anisette. The infernal machine in the corner is, I find, a mill for making chocolate, and is turned from below by an invisible mule. The old landlord does a great trade in chocolate, which sends forth its sickly and overpowering odour.

So we were glad to find that, like the mule, we, too, had to go below for our repasts. It is a most curious and interesting place; a sort of civilised dungeon, very clean and cheerful. In the first room, the thick stone walls are whitewashed, and the tables are covered with pure white cloths. We have never seen anything quite like it, and feel hundreds of miles underground. Curious lamps give us their light. Rosita flits about and waits upon us, and gives us lessons in Mallorquin, the pathetic cadence of her voice making it very soft and sweet. At least, H. C. says so. Mariquita, the gazelle, on the contrary, makes herself scarce. She stays above, knitting, and retires as much as possible from observation.

At the end of the room, a thick stone archway leads to the kitchen. And framed in this archway, as it were, the old mother of the girls stands at her range, cooking our modest repast. This also we find very interesting. It all forms a most unusual picture; and here I tell H. C. is subject enough to hand him down to posterity.

The old mother is a very nice old woman. She looks as if she had not found life a bed of roses. There is a singularly sad expression upon her placid face, which might be a protest against fate and fortune. Her features are strangely immovable, nothing ever changing except a little frown between the brows, which comes and goes like small clouds over an autumn sky. She smiles rarely, but when she does so, it is not easily forgotten. She is little and stout, and pro-

bably was once slim and comely, as her girls now are. Time, like an ever-rolling stream, not only bears its sons and daughters away, but robs them of their charms. What would one not give for the elixir of perpetual youth!

Rosita waits upon us very assiduously. She evidently racks her imagination to invent little things that will give us pleasure. Our Mallorquin lessons come in as interludes between the courses. She enquires very politely after A., shows anxiety as to when he is next coming; smiles serenely when we tell her that he will be here in two days; smiles incredulously when we say that as we have come here he will no doubt go to the other fonda.

Altogether we feel that our reign and our Mallorquin lessons will be over when the diligence bears A. to the hospitable doors of the Fonda del Pastor. Somehow, Rosita's incredulous smile has been more convincing than the strongest argument. We are quite sure, now, that A. will not go to the other fonda. I have had a stern lesson and a severe shock. A.'s beautiful spirit of disinterestedness has dissolved into thin air, like the baseless fabric of a vision. My faith in human nature has declined.

The more we see of this old town the more we are in love with it. The streets are narrow, but quaint and characteristic. It possesses none of the old courts that charm us in Palma, but it has compensations. From many a house there issues the sound of the loom. At a certain hour of the evening, as you pass, you suddenly hear the people within their doorways, repeating their vespers. One sees this kind of thing in the Tyrol, where, in the small mountain villages, it is still more picturesque. There it is universal, but it is not so in Soller. The women croon their devotions with a curious intonation. Real music and melody is unknown to them. They have no high aspirations and no ecstasies. Here, as in all parts of Mallorca, they are very priest-ridden. The priestly element predominates, and, compared with the population, the number of priests is very large. I cannot say much for their personal appearance; we have only seen about two priests since we entered the island that we really thought looked decent members of society. One was driving a country cart, and was so clean and clean shaven, looked so pleasant and straightforward, that we quite wished to make his acquaintance as a phenomenon. But he passed on in a cloud of dust and we saw him no more.

The other was perambulating the cathedral in Palma, came up to us, and very politely showed us some of its stronger points. I was also introduced a few days ago to a worthy canon. We had a good deal of interesting conversation, carried on in French. He was fat and jolly and merry; evidently took life very easily; was one, I am sure, to grant many indulgences; had no narrow views of life; did not think that he or I had been sent into the world to make ourselves miserable with perpetual and penitential ordinances. One likes to

come across these large-minded ecclesiastics. At heart, I believe they are better, hold healthier views of life and religion, than your ascetic monk who would spend his days in fasting and his nights in vigil.

Soller seems rather overcrowded. As I have said, the people stare at us with a large amount of misdirected curiosity. When we sally forth with our camera we are especial objects of attention. They are all anxious to be taken, and we have no difficulty in getting any amount of ready-made groups. The people are very civil, too, and allow us to go through their houses into their gardens to photo-

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graph views from the river. This is by far the most picturesque part of Soller. It would, indeed, be difficult to match elsewhere this strange accumulation of old bridges and ancient houses, and dilapidated walls, and dried up torrent.

About us are the hills, towering around, shutting in our horizon. It becomes oppressive. We feel as if we wanted a free current of air. The place, I have said, is enervating, and the people are pallid. The church tower rises in the midst, square and prominent. It is an ancient building, but so altered and renewed that its antiquity is lost. We went in this afternoon. A special service was going on, and the place was crowded. A preacher in the pulpit was holding forth with much voice and gesticulation. Faces were upturned to him. The profound obscurity was relieved only by lighted candles on the far-off altar. Of course all this is very

effective. We should be impressed by it ourselves, you and I, if we had not been born to happier influences. Yet, if they are sincere, and we all get to Heaven at last, what matter the road that has led us there? To whom little has been given, of them little will be required.

We soon had to make the best of our way out again. The atmosphere was heavily charged. H. C. turned faint.

We went straight off to the port of Soller. It is about two miles or so from the town, and the walk is a very lovely one. The whole way is lined on either side with orange and lemon groves. The trees are laden and bowed down with their beautiful fruit: golden balls nestling amidst richest verdure. Nothing is greener and fresher than the foliage of the orange trees.

People were at work, looking after their fruit harvest; pruning and tending. They seem very glad to see us, and ask us to go into the groves and pluck the fruit. Nothing loth, we do so. They pick us the ripest oranges, and we revel in the delicious scent and flavour. It is delightful to walk amongst these groves, under the trees, whilst the hot sun over-head warms the fruit and scatters its perfume upon the air, and flecks our path with dancing lights and shadows. We are in a new world, and what a world!

The men, too, are so civil and polite that they win our hearts. They look their best, dressed in white shirts, with a scarf tied round their waist. If they have any curiosity about us, it is discreetly veiled. Unfortunately we cannot keep up any conversation. A word here and there is understood, and the rest goes by signs. Mallorquin is very different from Spanish. The strange thing about the former is, that so many of its words resemble the French; so much so, that a Mallorquin going off into the Béarnais district of the Pyrenees will manage to get on very comfortably with his native language. At the end of a month I am quite sure that we should speak excellent Mallorquin, if we chose to apply ourselves to the task.

Strolling into these orange groves, holding mute conversations with the workmen; delighting and being delighted; seeing the best of life and thinking the best of mankind under these sunny skies; it takes us a very long time to get through our two miles to the port.

But we are there at last. Before us is the beautiful harbour, its entrance formed by green slopes wide enough to admit goodly-sized vessels. Each height is crowned with a lighthouse. The blue waters of the harbour are calm and beautiful as the Mediterranean can ever be. On the right reposes a small fishing village, ancient and very picturesque. The whole place is very quiet, the image of peace and serenity. Not a human being is anywhere visible. They are sleeping, or out at sea, or working in the fields. From this port many of the oranges and the produce of the island are shipped and sent out into the world. Amongst this produce I should make especial mention to you of the green almonds of Mallorca. They

are the most delicious and delicate of fruits, resembling a filbert some hundred times refined.

This port of Soller is one of the prettiest spots in the island. All the ports of Mallorca are more or less beautiful. There is such infinite repose about them; you feel so out of the world. Of bustle and confusion there is none. With the exception of Palma they are all apparently abandoned; reminding one of the creeks and inlets of some of the far-away islands in the North Sea; shores that are given up to solitude and rest, and the clang of the wild bird. I never hear the cry of a sea-gull, or catch sight of a cormorant on the wing, or see an oyster-catcher diving beneath the surface, but at once I am transported to those wild and solitary haunts, where amidst the dash of the waves and the echoing of the rocks, and the scream and whirl of myriads of birds, some of my happiest and healthiest hours have been passed.

We turned back from the port, down the long, straight road, and past the orange and lemon groves, where the men were still at work and gave us friendly greeting. More picturesque than ever seems the little old town, which really is almost matchless. Looking over the bridge on either side you have the backs of the houses, all forms and sizes. Balconies overhanging, windows large and unglazed; double roofs where clothes are hanging out to dry; cages given up to the pigeons. The shallow stream runs over its bed, all fury past until the next rains come. Rough and picturesque steps lead down from the walls. Across, there, is one of the large wells, and some twenty or thirty women are all washing and scrubbing for their very lives. An old tree bridges the stream. The church tower stands out boldly, contrasting with those far-off hills. All this H. C. has faithfully reproduced, and I am therefore able really to place the town before you as it exists. But there are a thousand-and-one other and lovely nooks which it is impossible to send you.

When we entered the fonda it was growing late. The diligence had arrived. There was a certain atmosphere of bustle and arrival about the inn. We felt that we were invaded. Instinct told us that A. and B. had put in an appearance: for two days have passed since we came to Soller.

"I told you so," said H. C., triumphantly. "I knew how much they would go to the other fonda, and put up with the beautiful old lady. I really feel quite pleased that we have circumvented them."

This appeared so very improper a frame of mind, that I was about to administer a lecture when A. and B. appeared upon the scene.

"So glad that you have come here," said A. "So much more jolly to be all together. Lots of room and any amount of resources."

I could not quite reconcile this statement with what had gone before; but I am beginning to think there is something strange in the Mallorquin air, and everything I don't understand I immediately put down to atmosphere.

"It won't be for long," I said. "We leave to-morrow. Our lordly barouche is to be here at three o'clock."

"What!" cried A. "Return to Palma without going up the Puig Major? Absolutely impossible. It is not to be thought of. We will send a note by the return diligence, countermanding the lordly barouche, and to-morrow we will all go up the Puig Major, and make a grand day of it."

So, by sheer force of determination on A.'s part, it was settled. The Puig Major, you must know, is the highest peak on the island. It is a day's excursion, and, I believe, very hard work. I have agreed, but I tremble. As I sit here to-night, writing to you, I wonder what lies in store for me to-morrow; and whether, when night comes round once more, I shall be alive and again able to take up my tale for your benefit.

For night has fallen, the town is steeped in silence, the house in repose. Across the table H. C. is sketching. He is so charmed with Soller that for the moment he has forgotten all about poetry. He makes a remark every now and then, and we compare notes and go over the day's charming experiences. Occasionally I hear a muttered "Philanthropy, indeed!" "Disinterestedness, forsooth!" which seem rather to indicate the bent of his thoughts. And once he startled me by the loud exclamation of "Well, some men *are* green!" upon which he apologised, and explained that he was thinking of the trees he was washing in, and meant to say trees were green, not men. It was a *lapsus linguæ*. I put it all down to atmosphere.

Only the watchman disturbs the silence of the streets, with the same old cry. The stars above are large and glorious. We see the outlines of distant hills like huge monsters, portentous and weighted with omen.

Shall you be surprised to hear that to-night, at dinner, we had no Mallorquin lesson. A. monopolised the whole of Rosita's attention. I thought there would have been a duel between him and H. C., and had the greatest difficulty in keeping the peace. Serene skies without, but within, between these two, who each in his way can be so charming, thunder and lightning, storm and tempest.

Atmosphere undoubtedly.

And now in the very small hours of the night we retire. I waft you a thousandfold benediction, and pray all good angels have you in their holy keeping.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

IN a crowded London drawing-room, one evening near the end of May, Howard Scott was leaning against the door-post, rather sulkily wishing that the Season and its votaries were transported "to the planet Saturn" to look for political economy and the lost arts. He was at this "At Home" in attendance on his mother and sister, and up to the present moment had experienced no pleasure sufficient to counterbalance the discomforts of a heated atmosphere, an over-filled room, and a subdued Babel of small talk.

Among the ever-flowing and ebbing tide of evening-dressed humanity, which passed half-an-hour here on its way to and from the houses of other friends, there was no one possessing for him any special interest, though the majority greeted him with bow and smile, or with indescribable masculine gesture of recognition. He was just wondering whether it would be worth while to try and force a passage across the room to the neighbourhood of a certain sparkling blonde of his acquaintance, when his hostess's voice broke on his ear.

"Come," she said, "I want to introduce you to our beauty."

Lady Gamgee was very literary indeed, and very fond of all young writers; so it happened that Howard Scott—junior critic of the "Free Lance"—was rather a favourite of hers. He followed obediently, and she led him to the door of the conservatory, near which was standing the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. Her hair was dark brown, so were her eyes; her figure was tall, and beautifully formed. In defiance of fashion, she wore a clinging dress of softest Indian muslin, and absolutely no ornaments, save a branch of white lilac across her bosom.

"Miss Severn, let me present Mr. Scott to you."

A mutual bow. The introductory words were the briefest and commonest of commonplace, and to Scott they merely meant a not unwelcome permission to try whether this exquisite vision had a soul and a mind, or was merely waxwork. But to her the words were the trumpet of battle, the preface to a strong, determined effort. In that swift upward glance which she gave him before either of them spoke, she reviewed the field, the position of the attacking and opposing forces, the possibilities of defeat; and as her lashes fell again, her unspoken conclusion was this:

"I *can* make you like me, and I *will!*"

Howard opened with some feeble remark about the weather, which, it being May, in London had, of course, been rainy.

"Yes," said Miss Severn, slowly moving her large white fan. "I have just come from Madeira, and this climate seems to me to combine the acme of dreariness with the quintessence of neuralgia."

"You have just come from Madeira," he said, quickly. "That accounts ——"

"For what?"

"For my not having seen you before."

"Then I may conclude that you go out a great deal," she said, "and that not to know you argues oneself unknown."

"Not quite that," he returned, smiling. "But I am pretty constant at my people's chariot wheels. It is not often that I get any reward for my devotion, though,"—and as he said it, his look implied that on this occasion at least, he *had* been rewarded.

"I suppose you are not fond of going out?"

"Well, I don't think the game is worth the candle."

"No doubt you have exhausted all this sort of thing, but to me it is rather amusing—and exciting besides. At one of these receptions one might meet someone one had been longing to know for years."

"Yes, that is an advantage which Lady Gamgee's and kindred receptions have over those which are less by way of being literary. One may sometimes, among the Postlethwaites and Maudles, meet a real star."

"That is what I meant. It is sad, though, that as a rule, the 'star' does not think it worth while to shew any heavenly spark, and considers remarks on the heated atmosphere to be quite good enough for us sublunary mortals."

"Well, if the 'star' happens to be Dr. Wiseman, or one of the hygeinic set, his ideas on that subject might be worth having."

"I never did care about hygeine, and if I had, one hears so little else in Madeira that I should have been long ago surfeited with it. I wish you would tell me who all these people are."

"Of course you know that handsome man talking to Lady Gamgee?"

"I know that it is Sir John Holman, the new R. A., but I have never had the honour of speaking to him."

"You care for his work then?"

"Care for it? I worship it. Yet one can't help wondering whether there are such lovely women as he paints, or whether they have birth only in the consciousness of the master."

"I know there are such women," he answered, in a slightly changed voice, and looking at her earnestly.

"I am so glad to hear you say so, for it makes me hope that I may some day meet some of them," she said, smiling. "They might inspire my pencil as they do his."

"You paint then?"

"Yes. I have given a good deal of time to it. There was so little to amuse one at home."

"Have you ever exhibited? No? I should have so liked to see your pictures."

"Do you think you would? Perhaps you may some day; who knows? But are you a critic?"

"I write a little about art; but one doesn't care, after D'Israeli's definition of critics, to call oneself one of the band. When and how do you think that 'some day' is likely to arrive?" He leaned forward and spoke rather eagerly.

"I am coming to stay with Lady Gamgee next week, and then—it is not impossible that—ah! here is mamma. I see we are to leave."

He had the satisfaction of seeing her to her carriage, and then strolled clubwards, smoking a meditative cigar.

When Laura Severn reached her room that night she dismissed her maid pretty promptly, and unlocking her desk sat down before it. She drew out first a likeness of a young and pretty girl, then some letters, dried flowers and little schoolgirl treasures, and, lastly, the portrait of the same girl, beautifully painted, evidently a perfect likeness, but unmistakably taken *after* death, and so invested with a peculiar and horrible fascination.

Laura read the letters and kissed the portraits with passionate, loving lips. Then, laying her head on her outstretched arms, she sat and thought far into the night. The outcome of her reflections at length formulated itself in words something like these:

"He can love; he shall love. I will not spare him one pang of the pain *she* endured."

Three years before, Laura's cousin had died. The two girls, who were about the same age, had been brought up together in Madeira, and were like sisters. At seventeen Constance went to England on a visit to an aunt of hers. She remained away about six months, receiving several eligible offers of marriage, which she refused. Though never possessing Laura's brilliant, beauty, she had had a sweet, mignonne face, and large blue eyes with a very potent charm of their own. To most of the admiration she attracted she was quite indifferent, but Howard Scott's coming, as her aunt noticed, could always make her cheeks flush and her eyes brighten. He paid her a great deal of attention, and carried matters to such a point that the possible engagement was publicly canvassed. Then, when all the world was expecting the announcement of his betrothal to Constance, he took himself off to Scotland, without a word of farewell, leaving behind him a note to Constance as cold as snow and as indifferent as the monument. Soon after it was reported that he was paying great attention to the eldest daughter of Sir Alexander McDougall, the great Glasgow ship-builder.

Constance hid her grief bravely, and went steadily through her few remaining engagements, but when the last had been fulfilled she gave way, and returned to Madeira to die. Her chest was always delicate, and now she had grown careless of herself. She caught a violent cold by staying out in the rain one day "to walk off the dismals," as she told Laura, and in a month she was dead.

The night she died the cousins were alone together, and then Constance told, brokenly, the full story of that London season. No one but Laura ever heard it, and in her it engendered pity, grief, agony, and one other thing which overwhelmed and swept away all these before it—a supreme desire for *revenge* for her friend's spoiled life. When loving hands had made all fair round what was mortal of Constance Harewood, Laura took her easel into the room of death, and with the rapid skill of which she was even then mistress, painted a portrait of the dead face, with a fidelity no less unswerving because every measuring look at that face was anguish intense, every touch of the brush a new thrust of bitterest misery.

Between the two had existed the closest, warmest, and tenderest friendship, and half Laura's life seem buried in that grave. She seemed to know no way of living in a world where there was no Constance.

But while she wept passionate, bitter tears for her lost friend, the idea of avenging her remained constant with her, and helped her to bear her grief; and during the years of their mourning seclusion she devised scores of plots for its consummation. When her twentieth birthday arrived she begged to go to England, and her mother, who had long been a widow and her own mistress, acceded to her request, leaving the aunt, who had been Constance's chaperon, in charge of the Funchal establishment.

All through diversions of the life of gaiety which she now began to lead, Laura never permitted any other thought to take precedence of her fixed idea. She had never before gone much into society, and had passed nearly all her life with books and paintings; and a girlhood thus spent among ideals and unrealities was responsible for her romantic estimate of life. Her almost perfect beauty had as yet, strangely enough, made her no enemies. She seemed to be no one's rival. Perhaps because a girl must have been vainer than human nature is, or lovely beyond all rivalry to compare herself with the beautiful Miss Severn.

This combination of charms and faults duly went to stay with Lady Gamgee, and when Howard called there he saw her, but was not to see, so she decreed, her paintings. "Not yet, at any rate," she said.

Lady Gamgee being a very old friend of Scott's, he ventured on calling nearly every day; was asked to dinner once or twice, and was always careful to find out what Laura's engagements were, and at garden party, ball or reception, somehow they seemed bound to meet. Their acquaintance rapidly ripened into intimacy.

Mrs. Severn was spending a quiet month in Derbyshire with an old school friend, and, as she disliked London, was very glad to leave Laura with a responsible guardian, for so she considered Lady Gamgee to be. Poor Mrs. Severn! Had she but known that Howard Scott, who had wrecked her niece's happiness, was an almost

daily visitor in Eaton Square, she would hardly have enjoyed the rocks and woods and waters as much as she did.

And Laura's plans were succeeding au mieux. Scott's devotion would have been apparent to any observer less self-absorbed than Lady Gamgee. Soon would come Miss Severn's grand triumph, the moment when he would offer his love, and she would refuse it. This was her aim, her end: that he should love her as madly as it was in him to love any woman, and that she should laugh at him!

She hated him—or so she said to herself. And of course she must have hated him, or why did her hand tremble when his touched it? Why did her heart beat so when his foot was on the stairs? Why did her face flush if only his name were mentioned? Why did she care only for the time she passed with him, and think all of her life wasted that was not spent on her one great object?

"It is because I hate him so," she said to herself. "I had not thought it was in me, so to hate anyone. Yet I disguise it well! Ah! I should be a good actress."

Every night she used to take out the painted portraits of Constance and kiss them and talk to them. At first she used to whisper to them the words Scott had spoken during the day, but after awhile she discontinued this, and used simply to sit and think over the talk they two had had, and feel mildly exultant at the progress she had made.

Did any thought ever come to her that it was a cruel deed she was engaged in—that vengeance was not a weapon meant for hands like hers? If such scruples ever came she stifled them at once, and repeated to herself:

"An eye for an eye. It is *justice;* nothing more."

One June afternoon, when the earth was sleepy with heat, and the pavements dusty and baked, Howard Scott exchanged the glare and glitter of the streets for the cool, rose-scented boudoir in Eaton Square, where the electric-blue hangings made the temperature seem a degree or two lower than it really was.

"I am so sorry! Lady Gamgee is in the agonies of a crisis: the third volume of 'Pastors and Masters,'" said Laura, as she came forward to greet him, her long, soft draperies trailing behind her and making a palish pink light in the sun-blind shaded room. "I believe we shall have to entertain each other till tea arrives."

"I wish you would entertain me by showing me your paintings," he said, as he sat down on a low chair and began lazily to stroke Lady Gamgee's oldest and fattest pug.

"Do you?"

"Yes; very much indeed."

A pause.

"Well," abruptly, "I will."

"This is very good of you," he murmured, as he held the door for her to pass out. "If I only knew how to thank you."

"You are right to be grateful," she said, smiling up at him. "But I never show my pictures unless I am sure of a proper amount of gratitude." And she went out.

"How charming she is," thought Scott, as he paced up and down, waiting for her return. "And how utterly different from everyone else in this dull monotonous world." And he went on to wonder whether she cared anything for him. Although he had not known her long, he knew that she was exceedingly proud, and very sparing in her favours. A thousand little nuances of difference between her manner to him and her manner to other men came one after the other to his recollection, and he could not help fancying that she must care for him a little. How was he to know that she was only acting a part—playing out a preconceived rôle? How was he to know that she did not truly approve him?

And he was a man on whom any woman might have looked with approval. Tall, strong and muscular, with brown curly hair, and a soft moustache some shades lighter—a pair of laughing, handsome, don't-care, Irish grey eyes, and a firm, well-shaped mouth.

Altogether "horribly handsome," as Laura confessed to herself when she re-entered the room with her portfolios of sketches. He hastened to take them from her, and place them on a table.

"Now," she said, "you are to have your curiosity gratified."

With that, they began to turn over the sketches. They were wonderful, lifelike, though not unfrequently faultful technically—and had a *verve* and go about them which surprised Scott, who had expected from Laura's paintings at most mediocrity. They were mostly faces and figures, and among them he recognised several mutual friends.

"What a splendid talent you have for catching likenesses?" he said, in conclusion. They had gone through most of the drawings, and he had expressed his admiration of each as it was inspected.

"They are more interesting than fancy sketches."

"Did you ever paint your own portrait?"

"Yes."

"Won't you show it to me?"

"Yes—if you wish it."

She turned to leave the room. As she passed him their eyes met, and she read in his that what she had so wished for would not now long be delayed.

When she had looked out her own portrait and some other sketches, she paused a moment before returning to the boudoir, and held her hand against her heart, which was beating violently. She felt a mad desire to hide herself away. She thought for a moment of not seeing him again. She felt a sudden new dread of him, and of what he might say or do, and an equally new distrust of herself in the character of avenger. Yet, was all her scheme of retribution to end in—flight? *No.* For Constance Harewood's sake she would go

through with what she had planned, and make Howard Scott suffer, even as Constance had done.

When she entered the boudoir Scott was standing by the window, with his hands behind his back. He did not hear her quiet footstep till she was close to him, and holding out a sketch to him. It was a portrait of Constance in the heyday of her youth and happiness. Laura watched him intently as his eyes fell on it, but her close scrutiny only showed her a shadow of disappointment pass over his face. Nothing more: no regret, no recognition.

"Why, this is not you," he said; "yet I think I have seen the face."

"It is Constance Harewood, my cousin."

"Oh, I remember Miss Harewood perfectly now, but I did not know she was your cousin. I met her several times a year or two ago." But even as he spoke his hand was impatiently stretched out for Laura's own likeness.

She put it into his hand. It was the best work of hers he had yet seen—a perfect image of her face, and into it she had conveyed her own soul. By some strange coincidence, her expression at the moment when Howard raised his eyes from the painting to her face was just that of the picture.

A wave of passionate admiration broke over his soul, and he said impulsively:

"I don't know how I dare to ask you for such a treasure, but may I keep this——for a while?" he added, seeing her look of astonishment.

A strange tumult seemed to stir within her, and she could hardly find voice to question:

"Why?"

"Because I love it!" he burst out. "Because I love you! Because I would keep it always by me, as I would have *you* always by me. Oh, my queen! will you let me love you?"

She had sunk into a low chair, and he was kneeling before her, clasping her hands and looking into her eyes; and as she looked at him a tide of sweet madness flooded all her soul, and shut out all thought of her meditated revenge—all thought of Constance—all and every thought but this, that he loved her, and that every fibre of her being vibrated to the deep delicious joy of being beloved by him It was a moment of magnetic trance, but the revulsion of feeling was almost instantaneous.

"Good heavens!" she almost shrieked, starting up. "What sort of love can yours be? Here, look at this; and then tell me what such love is worth!"

And she held before his eyes the picture of Constance's dead face—the masterpiece of her painting—which she had destined to be an instrument of her revenge, and on which she now relied to speak for her and to crush Howard's pretensions as she felt she her-

self could *not* crush them. But he thrust the picture aside almost roughly, bestowing the most cursory glance on it.

"Laura—Miss Severn," he cried. "What do you mean? How can you expect me to look at anything but *you* at a moment like this? It is no time for play. I am in earnest. I love you with my whole soul—and I offer you my true and honest love. Will you have it? I want an answer. Don't tell me I was mistaken in the answer I thought I read in your eyes a moment ago."

"You do not deserve any answer—you will have none from me," she cried. "Let me go." And as she left the room poor Scott, with his whole heart on fire with love and suspense, and his brain whirling with conjecture and doubt, had to sit out three quarters of an hour of tea and literary gossip. He bore this—hoping that Laura would return, but she did not come, and he had to carry his restless, unsatisfied soul away from Eaton Square without seeing her again.

In the meantime the feelings of the would-be avenger were by no means enviable. Her first thought was that perhaps Constance's untried, untrained heart had mistaken the common civilities of society for something deeper. If Scott had ever *made love* to Miss Harewood, surely he *could* not be so callous at the sight of her pictured face. But she put these ideas from her as treacherous to her dead friend, and tried to steel her heart against her lover.

"It shows what a hardened, heartless villain he must be," she said. "To care no more than that! No doubt he makes love to a fresh girl every season."

Perhaps, though, he cared as little for her, Laura, as for any of the others: in which case, where was her vengence? But no; she felt, she knew by unerring instinct, that he did love her, deeply and passionately. And something had awakened in her which tried to find excuses for Howard, and longed to prove him less wicked than he seemed, and which whispered that after all it was love for her and the sight of her beauty which had made him forgetful, even of Constance. Of course this thought ought to have been unmitigatedly painful. How then shall we explain the fact that Miss Severn derived from it an exquisite, unacknowledged pleasure?

In the midst of all her brain's confusion one thing only was plain to her: she must see him no more, and must complete her vengeance, if necessary, by letter. Stay; what could be a completer revenge than going away, as he had done from Constance, and leaving no word behind?

So it came to pass that the next day Laura told Lady Gamgee she must go down to her mother; she felt quite unequal to any more dissipation. A statement which her pale face and weary eyes quite bore out. Lady Gamgee, whom nothing ever surprised, parted from her with gently expressed regret, and by two o'clock, Laura and her maid were in the express for Bakewell. At parting, Laura had confided to her hostess that Mr. Scott had made her an offer, and

that she had refused him and did not wish him to know where she was.

Mrs. Severn was amazed at her daughter's telegram, but Mrs. Fraser, her friend, who never went to London and was a great invalid, was delighted to have a chance of seeing Laura ; and the girl was very warmly welcomed. The mental strain which she had undergone had left her weak and pale, and she was made to go through a course of combined nursing and petting from which, however, she was often glad to escape for long walks alone. The monotonous peace of this country life soon reduced her state of confused elation and excitement to one of calm and even misery.

That calm was broken abruptly and violently one morning when her mother, at their tête-à-tête breakfast (Mrs. Frazer did not appear till noon), broke silence suddenly with a sharp exclamation of horror.

"What is it?" asked Laura. And her mother read :

"Sad Fatality at a Ball.—A shocking event occurred last night at a dance given by Lady Caroline Hill at her residence in Eaton Place. When the dancing was at its height, a gentleman was observed to leave his partner and make for the nearest settee ; but, before he could reach it, he fell heavily to the ground. On raising him he was found to be quite dead. The unfortunate gentleman was a Mr. Howard Scott, well known in literary and artistic circles. He was a member of the 'Athenæum,' 'Arts,' and other clubs, and his death will be regretted by a large number of friends. Why," continued Mrs. Severn, "that must be the same man —— But whatever is the matter, Laura?" For her daughter was gazing at her with wide, terror-filled eyes, and gasping vainly for breath.

The utter horror of this. The impassable barrier that Death reared between her and her lover showed her how hope had lived unrecognised in her heart all through these long, miserable days. And this very morning hope had had some food for growth, for, in an apologetic note from Lady Gamgee, saying Howard's importunity had driven her to enclose it, had come a letter from *him*. A passionate appeal which had caused those crushed doubts respecting the fidelity of Constance's story to rise again in Laura's breast. Had he not said that there must be some horrible mistake and misunderstanding? Did not her own heart echo his words? Was not his letter even then lying in her bosom? And now he was *dead*, beyond reach, beyond recall! Ah! now she knew too well that she loved him, but *he* would never know.

"What is it?" reiterated Mrs. Severn, anxiously. But Laura never answered. She had fainted.

When she recovered consciousness it was to tell her mother *all*, without any reservations whatever. Though she was inexpressibly shocked by the revelation of what she inwardly termed Laura's unchristian and revengeful spirit, she showed a very Christian forbearance herself, and did not reproach her daughter by one word or look

With the tender, all-embracing sympathy of which mothers seem to hold the merciful secret, she listened, condoled with and soothed her miserable child.

"Now, mother," said Laura at last, "there is only one thing left for me to do. I must see him."

"My poor child, it is quite impossible."

"Mother, I *will* go, and you must take me. There is no harm. There can be no harm, now he is dead."

She spoke with strange calmness.

"My dear, what would people say?"

"No one will know. Lady Gamgee will help us."

But her mother would not consent. As the day wore on, however, Laura's feverish excitement grew so intense that Mrs. Severn thought the lesser evil would be to take her to town and let matters take their course. So, with many apologies to Mrs. Frazer, they took the up train next morning.

Leaving their luggage at the Grosvenor, Mrs. Severn and Laura drove to Eaton Square. Lady Gamgee was at home, but engaged at the moment. If Mrs. Severn would not mind waiting? Mrs. Severn did not mind waiting, and they were shown into the boudoir.

Laura's heart, which had seemed turned to stone, stirred uneasily at the memories this room held for her. Here he had read so often to her; how soft and tender his voice had been. Here she had shown him her paintings; here he had held her hands and called her his queen; and now, neither here nor elsewhere, could she ever again hear that voice, feel that hand-clasp—never again!

She sat down in the same chair where she had sat when he asked her for her love, and leaned back with shut eyes, trying to picture that handsome bronzed face cold and set in death. Those eyes that had been so love-lighted closed stilly for ever, those once clasping hands coldly folded, but try as she would she could only think of him as she had last seen him, strong, tender, imploring—full of manhood's vigour and vitality.

"Ah, how changed he will be when I see him again." And as she thought it a slight movement in the room made her open her eyes.

Merciful Heaven! what was this? Here—now—unchanged, standing not two yards from her, the dead man himself. She started to her feet with an irrepressible cry. Then staggered and would have fallen but he caught her in his strong arms.

"Laura, can it be? Do you love me? Have you come yourself to bring the answer to my letter."

"Then you are not dead," she gasped. "It was in the paper." Howard looked pale, as from mental trouble, but otherwise was as unlike a dead man as need be.

"Oh, I can easily explain that," he said. Then exultingly: "But you *cared* when you thought I was dead? Ah, then the answer is

to be the one I want." At this moment he first perceived Mrs. Severn, who had hitherto remained speechless from astonishment.

"This lady—your mother—does she know?"

Mrs. Severn came forward: "I do not know how this false report of your death originated, sir," she said; "but I do know that your present conduct is utterly unjustifiable."

Howard's conscience did not seem to show him matters in this light, for he still kept his arm round Laura, who, in the delirious joy of this recovery of him, was utterly passive, and let him do with her as he would.

"Mrs. Severn," he said, "what, under Heaven, can you mean? I love your daughter, truly and honourably, and I am as innocent of any insult to you or to her as is the dead man whose fate you believed to be mine."

"What dead man?" It was Mrs. Severn who spoke.

"My cousin, Howard Brett Scott, who died two days ago, within a hundred yards of this house."

Hope long crushed stirred in Laura's heart, and shone on her eyes.

"Was it your cousin who deceived my cousin Constance?"

"It was certainly not *I*, beloved. If *that* is all that has stood between us, away with it for ever. I had the merest bowing acquaintance with Miss Harewood. My cousin was in the same set with her. But Lady Gamgee can tell you all about it, I dare say, if Mrs. Severn require further assurance. *You* cannot doubt me any more."

"No," said Laura; and Mrs. Severn came forward with outstretched hand:

"Forgive us; we have both misjudged you. I am assured of the truth of your story. Ah! here is Lady Gamgee." And she went into the writing-room to meet and greet that lady, who soon told her all that was needful about the other Howard and his efforts to obtain a wife with a fortune large enough to free him from his creditors.

Howard and Laura were alone once more in the little boudoir.

"Well, what is my answer to be?" he said, looking with great persistence into the downcast face.

"What do you want me to say?"

"Say—'Howard, I love you,'" was his moderate request.

"I wonder whether you will care to hear me say that when you know all, or whether you will not despise me and my love too?"

And with that she told him all.

"Can you forgive me?" she ended. "Do you not hate me for being so wicked?"

"Perhaps I might find it hard to forgive you if you had carried out your cruel resolve. But, after all, this misery was intended not for me, but for poor Howard, and he is beyond the reach of our punishment. And I am here, thank God, still within the reach of your love."

PERIL ON THE SEA.

A TRUE STORY.

THE little island of Kildena lies in the Arctic Ocean, seven miles to the North of Lapland. Formerly it was uninhabited, but, of late years, eleven families of different races have settled there for the sake of its fisheries. Undaunted by the privations and hardships of their chosen lot, they remain, year by year, on the barren island waiting with patience through the long night of winter.

They make and mend nets, put the little fleet of fishing boats into seaworthy condition, and fill up the remaining dark days with what ever pursuits or recreations the limited light given by fish and seal oils will permit them to follow.

One man, a Norwegian, had constituted himself general provider to the little colony, supplying them with food and clothes on the exchange system. He would take all the fish caught on the island and give to each fisherman, in return, a garment, or sack of rye flour, or some reindeer flesh, according to the several wants, and extent of each man's catch.

At intervals he sailed his boat to the mainland, and followed the course of a river for eighty miles, to Kola, a town of nine hundred inhabitants, principally Russian merchants. Here he sold his fish, and packed his little craft with a store of merchandise suited to the primitive needs of the settlers. In this way he had contrived to scrape together a sum equivalent to sixty pounds English money, which he stored away in a sealskin pouch, that always hung suspended from his neck.

Coin is scarce in those latitudes, and most of the fisherpeople are content to toil incessantly for a bare existence, knowing nothing of the mingled heartburnings and delights experienced by speculators. But Carl Hansen, the merchant of Kildena, whose adventures form the subject of this sketch, began to think this manner of amassing a fortune rather slow work ; and he determined, as soon as the fishing season was over, to leave the island, sell his boat at Kola, and make the best of his way to Bergen, his native town. There he hoped to lay out his small capital to better advantage, or otherwise go to sea in a merchant steamer.

When he first became the merchant of Kildena Island he planned to make a certain sum in a given time, which would enable him to return to Bergen, where a certain blue-eyed, fair-haired damsel, named Albertina, patiently waited for his home-coming, employing her time in spinning household linen in preparation for the one great event of her life.

This plan he had not yet accomplished. And now winter was coming on, during which season he would have to remain inactive, as far as money-making was concerned. The dull routine on the island would, he felt, be more than he could endure. Yet he spoke no word of his intention, not wishing to bear the reproaches he knew his fellow-colonists would heap upon him. But he stealthily made his preparations to leave the rigours of the Arctic Ocean when the twilight of winter began to shadow days as well as nights.

He soon completed his arrangements, and, under cover of darkness, conveyed his chest of clothes and much cherished belongings to his little four-ton cutter, *Concordia*. Then, telling the settlers he was going to Kola to post a letter, the last for the season, to his sweetheart, he set sail early on the morning of October the 16th, 1885.

A strong south-west wind was blowing, against which he found he could make no progress with his sails, so he pulled them down, and proceeded to ply the oars. But work as hard as he would, the distance between him and both mainland and island increased at every stroke. He was fain to rest on his oars from sheer exhaustion, and his dismay was great to perceive the speed at which his boat was spinning away from land, far upon the dreary waters of the Arctic Ocean.

Now Carl Hansen wished he had been less precipitate, and had waited for a more favourable wind. Contrasted with the dangers that surrounded him, bleak Kildena Island appeared like Paradise, and he thought, with longing, of the great fires, before which the islanders were just then preparing a savoury meal. But he was a hardy young man, a true descendant of the Norsemen, gifted with a nature that made him scorn the idea of hardship or danger. So he settled himself in the stern with the tiller in his hand, and, keeping the boat before the wind, he let her drift, and looked his position in the face.

He had brought no water with him, as he had intended to gather snow from the banks of the river, on his way to Kola. This he could have melted on a little bogie stove, which was fitted in the cuddy of the *Concordia*.

A supply of rye-bread and dried reindeer flesh, to last four or five days, was all the provision he had made; so he at once put himself on diet.

It was well he did so, for the wind continued from the same quarter for four days; then shifted, and a heavy north-west gale followed, which, in two more days, blew him back to the shores of Lapland.

All these days he had not been able to sleep, or leave his position at the helm, for if he had allowed the boat to turn broadside to the waves, she would inevitably have been swamped. Still he did not lose his strength of nerve, although despair often assailed him through the long, lonely watches, with little to eat, and nothing to quench the thirst that was now almost intolerable.

The Norwegian leather jacket and fur cap, fitted with lappets for the ears, warded off frost-bites. In addition to these articles of clothing, he drew over his reindeer-skin boots and nether garments a sleeping-bag, which is a bag made from reindeer or other skin, and long enough to envelope the whole figure ; a highly necessary protection in a climate where an inadvertent exposure to frost would deprive one of the toes for the rest of one's life.

So equipped, Carl Hansen mechanically continued his task of keeping the *Concordia* straight with the wind ; until, through the semi-darkness of the sixth day, he saw land close before him.

Then the blood quickened in his veins, and, steering for the shore, he searched for a sheltered cove. Fortunately, he found one that formed a miniature harbour. Here he made soundings with his oar, and found a position to anchor in, which enabled him to wade on shore. Wild and inhospitable was the scene. Rugged rocks, surmounted by spectral-looking glaciers, bound the dreary coast : not a sign of habitation or trace of humanity. He stood alone ; a solitary waif amid the towering, forbidding pinnacles of ice ; far from his fellows, and without hope of succour.

But two pressing needs blunted the sense of his desolation. Thirst and want of sleep made paramount demands for the present. So he collected a pailful of snow, and having melted it, satisfied himself with long, life-renewing draughts. Then he proceeded to make himself as comfortable as possible in the cuddy, and soon fell into a slumber which lasted for twelve hours.

He awoke refreshed, and, strong with new hope and energy, ate the small portion of food he had allotted for each day, washed it down with another copious draught of melted snow, and then proceeded to explore.

He managed to climb a rocky cliff that was not quite so inaccessible as most on the coast, and leaving marks as he went, that he might be able to retrace his path, he wandered a mile or two in each direction, hoping to find some trace of human life, perchance a Lapp fisherman's hut.

But Carl Hansen sought in vain ; nothing but a dreary waste of snow, edged and dotted over with hills of ice, whose points sharply pierced the air, rewarded his search.

The wind had now dropped to a calm, and, as he groped his way back to the boat, he could hear the sound of his own footfalls on the crisp snow echo behind him through the dead silence. To his excited imagination it seemed as though he was followed by a ghostly and relentless pursuer, who, with grim leisure, sure of his prey, dogged his steps. A panic of fear seized him, and he commenced to run ; then, with a strong effort of will, he checked his flight, and turned to peer around him. Nothing was visible, as far as he could see, but the stationary hummocks of snow and glaciers of ice, looming larger through the deepening darkness—for night was approaching.

When he sighted the landmark which would lead him to the cove where the *Concordia* lay at anchor, he felt relieved, and hastened now to gain his only shelter. He waded out to her, and then proceeded to pull off his long reindeer-skin boots, and replace them with dry ones, meanwhile debating with himself whether he should have another sleep, or pull along the shore while it was calm, in search of a settlement.

He decided upon the latter course, and was in the act of pushing his boat off into deep water, when he saw a white mass moving across the beach toward him. Experience told him that the object, which looked like an animated snow hummock, was, in reality, a polar bear, and he prepared for the attack he knew would follow, with speed and coolness.

When a polar bear is not hungry he is rarely aggressive, and a pelting with stones will often send him away. But, in winter, when birds and seals have disappeared, there is nothing for him to feed upon, and he crouches in some sheltered corner, dozing his time away, and just keeping life within him by sucking a kind of teat in his paw, through which he draws the blubber, that in summer, when food is plentiful, forms in a layer between the skin and flesh. It is when sharp hunger is gnawing at his vitals that he proves a dangerous foe to mankind.

So Carl, with the quickness taught by former circumstances, seized a heavy hatchet, and pushed rapidly off from the shore. But the bear was close upon him, and, with a furious roar, leaped toward the boat, missing her by a few feet. Carl, however, had barely time to jump from the thwarts to the well of the boat before the bear was by his side, with one huge paw upon the gunwale. A crashing blow from the hatchet loosened the bear's hold for a moment; the next, the animal re-appeared, and, howling with pain and fury, clutched the boat's side with his uninjured paw.

Carl knew that all was over with him if the bear once rose above the level of the gunwale; so, giving the axe a tremendous swing, he brought it down on the paw with redoubled force, crushing the great bones and sinews of the brute, who fell back in the water, uttering fearful cries of impotent rage and agony, but disabled from returning to the attack.

All thought of further sleep was now at an end.

The calm weather made it possible for Carl to creep along the shore, at a short distance off the land, yet close enough for his practised eye to discover, through the bright starlit night, any trace of human life. But only the dreadful sameness of rock, ice and snow met his view; not even a bear enlivened the scene.

The wind again freshened, and he drifted three more days before he could return to land. Then once more he stranded his boat, drank some snow-water, and, in spite of fear of hungry bears, fell again into a deep, long sleep. Then, finding nothing more than barren

coast, he the second time trusted himself to the winds and waves, with the barest of hopes in his heart that rescue might come before it was too late.

Shortly the wind began to blow again and rose to half a gale, sending the poor little tossed-about *Concordia* out of sight of land. Despair began to take hold upon poor Carl's heart. He could see no prospect in store for him but this constant drifting before the wind, or the, perhaps, more terrible fate of being driven back to land, only to find death from cold and starvation on those terrible shores. He determined to eat the small portion of food that remained, and then lie down in the bottom of the boat and wait for the bitter end.

Fourteen days of misery had gone by since he had left Kildena Island. He wondered that his strength had held out so long !

Slowly and sadly he ate his last meal. Then the thought came into his mind that he would say his prayers, and lie down as if he were going to sleep, just as he used to do in childhood. He knelt upon the seat in the stern, and tried to remember the words his mother had taught him. Long forgotten and unused as they had been, they came back freely to his memory, and through the noise of the waves dashing against the boat, and the tossing from side to side, his heart and soul went into the simple words, and upward to his Maker.

They brought a strange calm with them, and a feeling of acquiescence with the fate that seemed inevitable. No terror-stricken raving broke from him at the approach of death ; he quietly thought of his betrothed at home in Bergen, and regretted that she would never know his end ; then resigned himself to the will of God. He turned to look in the direction of his native land, and a benediction on his dear ones at home came from his heart to his lips.

But as he rose upon the waves, against which he no longer did battle, his glance fell upon something which made his blood once more rush quickly through him. Could that dark object be a vessel ? Was it possible that, at this season, there could be anyone daring enough to navigate the Arctic Ocean ?

He drew his hand across his eyes, thinking that long watching had diseased his vision. He looked again. No, it was not a delusion ! He could see her coming nearer, and apparently steering in a straight line for his boat.

After about ten minutes' watching, he saw she was a steamer. Then another time elapsed ; how long Carl never knew, so intense was the strain upon his nerves ; but, when she came near enough he gave a succession of mighty shouts, which terminated in a scream, almost a yell, of despair, as the steamer moved on, apparently regardless of his cries for help.

But the shrillness of his last appeal penetrated to the ears of the officer of the watch, who leaned over the bridge and peered into the half-light, until he saw the poor little craft, tossed like a cork over the water in the steamer's wake.

Then he gave stentorian orders to put the ship about, and, when near enough, sent his voice over the seething waves to the poor castaway, who shouted hoarsely back, and eagerly caught the rope thrown to him by the crew.

The little *Concordia* was quickly drawn to the steamer's side, and one of the sailors went down to her.

It was well that he did so, for he found poor Carl half fainting with the revulsion of feeling he had experienced within the last few minutes.

The man spoke some cheering words to him in Swedish, and made a noose in the rope for Carl to sit in, and both were drawn on board the steamer. They took him to a comfortable berth, and gave him spirits in small quantities, until he revived. Then, after eating some food, he recovered sufficiently to tell his sad tale of privation and exposure, which awoke much commiseration among the crew. They were Swedes, on board the Swedish steamer *Gustav Tilborg*, laden with timber from Archangel, and bound for Bordeaux.

Carl learned that he had drifted two hundred and fifty miles from Kildena Island in the fourteen days since he started, hoping to reach Kola. An over-ruling Providence had, in his darkest hour, caused the wind to drive him in the track of the only steamer left to plough the waters of the Arctic Ocean.

Twelve days previously, the last English steamer had left Archangel with her cargo of timber. Beyond that date there is no certainty of getting out of the White Sea, for, as soon as frost sets in, it is liable to become a mass of ice, and vessels caught have to remain until spring breaks up the ice and sets them free. But the Swedes are a daring race, and the temptation of a much higher freight induced the captain of the *Gustav Tilborg* to risk a block. To this apparent chance, Carl Hansen owed his rescue from an untimely and terrible fate.

The warm-hearted crew of the *Gustav Tilborg* showed Carl unremitting kindness, and when the steamer put into Dartmouth in November, 1885, for a supply of bunker coal the captain gave him the choice of remaining there or proceeding to Bordeaux. He chose the former, and when the *Gustav Tilborg* went on her way he remained behind at Dartmouth, where the particulars of this sketch were obtained from his own lips.

Carl remained at Dartmouth some days, where his story made him an object of curiosity and interest, while his stalwart and well-built figure won universal admiration.

At his own request, the Norwegian consul shipped him to America, where, let us hope, he is making sufficient money—if he has not already done so—to return to Bergen, and reward the patient faithfulness of his Albertina.

A. W. P.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT MEADOW HOUSE.

THE old town of Fairbridge was looking its best in the sunshine of that perfect May morning. It was a place of many trees; even in the High Street, the soft wind pelted you with stray blossoms that came drifting over garden walls. Shops were made picturesque with a luxuriance of ivy growing all round doors and windows; most of the houses had balconies filled with flowers, that looked like gardens in the air. A church bell was chiming sonorously for eleven o'clock service; and two tall old gentlewomen, with a charming quakerish air about them, were entering a Gothic portal, with prayer-books in their hands.

"There are the Miss Earles," said Alma to her companion. "By the way, I have promised to call on them this afternoon. I hope Mr. Redburn won't be in one of his exacting moods, as I want to take you to Meadow House. You would like the Earles, I think."

She spoke in the most natural tone. Beatrice gave one quick glance at the delicate aquiline profile by her side, and saw that every feature was perfectly composed. Alma was walking along the High Street, in her pretty grey costume, looking the very embodiment of calm ladyhood.

"Now we are coming to the post-office," she went on after a little pause. "Next-door to the bank, you see," she added, as Beatrice guiltily posted her letter. "Our old doctor lives in this house with the great brass plate on the door. He comes once or twice a week to see Mr. Redburn, and I'm afraid he has a bad opinion of him. I have great faith in Dr. Bendall."

"I don't think Mr. Redburn has a very good opinion of his own case," said Beatrice. "He seems hopeless about getting well."

"He will never get well. He ought to have left India years ago. Papa wonders how he ever lived to come home."

"Does it not make you nervous to have such an invalid in your house?" Beatrice asked.

"I am not often nervous," Alma replied; "and papa is really fond of him, and does not find him in the least troublesome. To us, he is always pleasant and yielding enough; I fear he keeps his tyranny for you alone."

"I shall try not to mind it; but I can't help wishing that he would

take it into his head to be guardian to some other girl. Heaven sends almonds to those who have no teeth! I can't be as grateful for his favour as I ought to be."

"It is curious," said Alma, "that you are not better pleased at the thought of being an heiress. I don't think you quite realise what a delightful thing money is."

"But one may pay too high a price even for such a delightful thing as money. One may have to give up freedom—liberty of thought and action—the companionship one loves best—and these things are far more satisfying than a fortune."

"You are afraid that Mr. Redburn will want to take you away from the Miltons," Alma remarked. "I believe he is a little jealous of them."

"I cannot leave Mrs. Milton; I have told him so."

"And precisely because you have told him so, he will return to the subject again and again. My poor, dear child, he will never let you go back to Wimpole Street, if he can help it! He means to keep you a prisoner at Oak Lodge until he has formed his plans."

"Is he really so unreasonable?" asked Beatrice, with a tremor in her voice.

"He really is. We will try to make the captive as happy as possible; but it will be a lengthy captivity, I assure you."

"No," said the girl, with a shake of the head; "however pleasant captivity may be, I cannot endure it long. You are very good to me, Miss Lindrick, and Oak Lodge is a charming place, but there are others whose claims must not be forgotten."

"Ah, there are others—of course," rejoined Alma, with a significant little smile; "and Fairbridge must seem dolefully dull after town."

But Beatrice was not disposed to complain of the dulness of this pretty old place, with its grey walls, its mellow red houses, its wealth of ivy and flowers. She liked the sunshiny calm of the ancient town; the leisurely way in which people went about their business; the slow, peaceful mode of life that prevailed here.

They came to the bridge, and paused for a minute to look down into the rapid brown stream, rushing under the arch. All along the banks, there was a purple mist of wild hyacinths and a fresh greenery of young leaves. A cuckoo, far off, uttered his sing-song call; and a thrush, close at hand, warbled loud and clear. And yet—

> "There was something the season wanted,
> Though the ways and the woods smelt sweet."

This was what Beatrice thought as she stood on the old grey bridge and watched the stream, with a remembering look in her deep eyes.

"Come," said Alma, after a brief silence: "we must not stay too long: Mr. Redburn is expecting you at home. I am very glad that

you like our town and its surroundings. To me, this dull old Fairbridge will always be the very dearest place in all the world."

A faint sigh followed the words, and again Beatrice fancied that she had at first misjudged her companion. A woman, who clung so fondly to old scenes and their associations, could not possibly be shallow and cold at heart.

It wanted only a few minutes to luncheon when they returned to Oak Lodge. Mr. Redburn, in his arm-chair by the fire, was fuming a little at Beatrice's absence, and Colonel Lindrick was good-naturedly trying to smooth his ruffled plumes.

"You have not yet said good-morning to me, my child," said the old man in a fretful tone, as Beatrice entered. 'I have a great many things to say, and I expected to find you here when I came downstairs."

The girl stood before him, her soft, cream-tinted face fresh from the air and sunshine, her ripe lips parted in a slight smile. She seemed to be in no haste to make excuses for herself; and the Colonel, under the light of those deep blue eyes, was moved to take her part.

"Alma was determined to carry off Miss Ward after breakfast," he said, promptly. "My daughter has an exaggerated notion of the beauties of Fairbridge, and always wants her guests to admire the place. I dare say she has bored Miss Ward fearfully!"

"Do I look bored?" asked Beatrice, with dimpling cheeks. "You have no idea what a charming walk I have had!"

"It was quite difficult to get her away from the bridge," said Alma, putting her hand on Mr. Redburn's chair and bending over him; "but I did not forget you, and I reminded her that you were waiting for a long talk."

"You are always thoughtful for others," replied the old man, with a well-pleased glance. "My dear Beatrice, you must take lessons of Miss Lindrick. Remember that I shall want you after luncheon. We must have a serious, business-like conversation."

The girls ran away to take off their hats, and Alma gave Beatrice a sympathising nod and glance outside the door.

"Don't be afraid, the conversation won't last long," she whispered. "His liver makes him dreadfully sleepy, and he coughs if he talks too much. He will doze off after a few minutes, and then you will be free to come to Meadow House with me."

Miss Lindrick was quite right. Beatrice dutifully prepared herself to spend a weary afternoon by the invalid's arm-chair; but Mr. Redburn's drowsiness overpowed his desire to give her a long lecture. His eyelid's grew heavy, his words came slowly, and presently he dismissed her, and gave himself up to a long nap.

Her heart was beating fast when she walked down the chestnut avenue, and out into the sunny road that afternoon. She had taken pains with her dress, anxious to look her best in the eyes of Godwin's

people, although he was completely severed from them. Some day, she thought, they might learn to do him justice, and ask forgiveness for their cruelty. And—and—when the fact of his engagement came to their ears, they would remember that they had seen his betrothed and that she was by no means a person to be ashamed of.

With her mind full of these thoughts, she found herself in a long, low room, divided from a smaller room by folding doors. There were four French windows looking out on a terrace, and creepers and early roses clustered thickly round them. Within, the furniture had all the quaint, old-fashioned grace that belongs to a bygone age. There were a great deal of rare old china and a few choice cabinet pictures ; and in the atmosphere, there lingered the delicate sweetness of pot-pourri. To Beatrice it seemed, then and always, the prettiest old room that she had ever seen. And there rose up before her eyes a vision of a little slender boy, with fair hair, sitting on the floor in the sunshine and playing a quiet game in solitude. The boy was Godwin Earle, whose portrait, taken in childhood, was hanging on the wall.

Dorothy and Jane Earle had been very much alike in their young days : and now that they were old women the resemblance was more striking still. They had the same delicately-cut features, the same gentle eyes and silver hair. Both were tall, and both possessed that quiet air of distinction and refinement which marks the gentlewomen of the old school. They wore gowns of dove-coloured cashmere, soft and fine, and cambric kerchiefs, edged with real old lace, instead of ordinary collars. Everything about the pair was dainty and old-fashioned ; and you felt that their lives must always have been still and colourless, like themselves. They had had no struggles ; no strong hopes or haunting fears. The fitful fever of life had passed them by. They knew nothing of those heart conflicts and passionate yearnings that hurry other women to the end of their journey. With them, existence was a slow procession of tranquil days, marching smoothly onward to eternal rest.

They greeted Alma with genuine affection. She was a girl after their own hearts : discreet, well-bred, always unmoved by any passing events. She had shown just the proper amount of regret at giving up their unfortunate nephew, and had manifested, in a hundred pretty little ways, her desire to continue the old intimacy with his family.

And this was Miss Beatrice Ward, the girl who was looked upon as the adopted daughter of the rich Mr. Redburn !

A tall, graceful young woman, well formed and stately, although still in her teens. Beside her, Alma looked like a little, wintry, pink rose placed near a splendid Lamarque just bursting into creamy bloom. Beatrice had donned her best black cashmere gown and crowned her golden-brown head with a small black lace bonnet, perfect in its simplicity. She had chosen the style of dress best calculated to make her look dignified, and was childishly anxious to

produce a good impression. But of that inward anxiety, not the faintest trace appeared. She was so still and queenly that the old ladies were quite charmed with her high-bred air of repose.

Jane Earle, who was three years younger than Dorothy, was just a shade less placid than her sister. She found more things in the world to admire, and more to lament over than Dorothy ever did. This lovely girl, with the deep-coloured eyes and soft, crimson lips, awoke something like warm feeling in that calm bosom of hers. The fresh, full bloom of Beatrice stirred up half-forgotten thoughts of youth and love. She hovered round the girl as a bee hovers round a flower, and began to talk to her.

"You must find Fairbridge very quiet after life in town," she said, in her thin, pleasant voice.

"I think it a charming old place," Beatrice answered. "It is delightful to have one's fill of flowers and sunshine."

"I do not care for London, myself," said Aunt Jane; "and I really don't think I could live without my flowers—my sisters call them my nurslings. This is such a sheltered spot that we seldom lose any of our plants in winter. Summer comes early to us and lingers long."

"I can't imagine that storms ever visit Fairbridge," said Beatrice, with her girlish smile. "It seems to me to be something like the Lotus-eaters' paradise—if one lived here too long, one might sink into dreamy forgetfulness of busy life. At least, some people might."

"You would not, perhaps?" Jane said, smiling too. "The young like to see something of the world. I was never fond of gaiety, myself, but then I was rather delicate as a girl. I could not bear to be taken away from my greenhouses and garden."

Just then, Aunt Dorothy thought it proper to say a word to the new-comer. It was so seldom that any fresh face appeared in their circle that both the old ladies were really interested in Miss Ward.

"Miss Lindrick says that you were delighted with the view from our old bridge," she said, graciously. "It is very pretty, especially in spring; and it was in May that Birket Foster liked the scene best. We must show you his water-colour drawing, done on the very spot where you were standing this morning."

She rose, moved a few paces down the long room, and pointed out the picture hanging on the wall.

It was charming enough to have kept Beatrice spell-bound, if her eyes had not lighted on another picture suspended beside it. Out of an oval frame there looked a fair, boyish face, done in crayons by an artist's hand. There was almost a saintly sadness in the large, soft eyes; an expression too pathetic for a child's features; a look that, when seen in early youth, is often the foreshadowing of future sorrow.

If Beatrice had known that her composure was to be so sorely tried, she would never have entered Meadow House that day. At

the sight of this portrait, so like, and yet unlike, the man she loved with all the strength of her heart, her self-control almost deserted her. He had had just that look in his eyes when she had first seen him, standing on the line, exactly a year ago!

Miss Lindrick was watching her attentively. To a girl like Beatrice, she knew that the portrait would be a test. It must indeed be an uncommonly prosaic woman who can be quite unmoved by a likeness taken in childhood of the man she loves. Those soft lips, innocent of love-vows, how sweet they must have been! Even Alma, shallow-hearted as she was, had known some such thoughts and feelings as these.

"The blue hyacinth tints, mingling with the fresh green, are so lovely," Aunt Dorothy was saying. But she spoke to deaf ears. The girl's eyes were shining with a feverish light; her breast was heaving. In another moment her emotion would have been made painfully evident, had not fate interposed in the shape of the Countess Gradizoff.

Although she had a tall figure and regular features, the Countess was not like her sisters. About her there was more fulness and colour; her gowns rustled as theirs never did; her voice was louder and deeper-toned. She was considerably younger than Jane; her hair was a dark iron-grey. She wore no cap, and had a fashionable dress, made in the latest style; but, handsome as she was, there was none of that old-world dignity and grace that made Dorothy and Jane so charming. She was a woman who loved pomp and show as well as they loved refinement and retirement.

Her entrance had the effect of bringing Beatrice to her senses. Caroline Gradizoff was eager to see the future heiress, and greeted her with a gracious display of goodwill. She was keenly alive to Beatrice's beauty, and made up her mind at once that the girl was sure to be a great social success.

There was something in those hard eyes, looking shrewdly into hers, that nerved Beatrice to gather up her forces. She met the Countess with a quiet self-possession which rather surprised that domineering woman, who was accustomed to play the great lady in Fairbridge. Not one more glance did she venture to bestow on Godwin's portrait; and Alma, always furtively watching her, admitted that the girl had pulled herself together very well.

The last shadow of a doubt was now removed from Miss Lindrick's mind. She was quite convinced that Beatrice Ward loved Godwin Earle as deeply as ever woman loved. But was it a requited love? and were the pair only in the first stage of an attachment, or were they plighted lovers?

"She is absurdly romantic," thought Alma contemptuously. "Let Mr. Redburn forbid her to have anything to say to Godwin and she will fling his fortune in his face. Heroics are quite in her line."

As they were leaving the house, they met Olga Gradizoff returning from an afternoon walk. She was a heavy, uninteresting girl, and Beatrice scarcely gave her a thought. Almost in silence those two, Alma and Beatrice, walked back to Oak Lodge; and the latter slipped away, as soon as possible, to her own room.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PORTRAIT.

THERE was a letter from Godwin the next morning. It came up to Beatrice's room with her early cup of tea; but not before the address had been seen and the handwriting recognised by Miss Lindrick.

Alma turned back to her pillow for a moment with a dull pain in her heart. She remembered the days, not so very long ago, when the sight of that handwriting had given her a little thrill of joy. And then there had been later days, when his letters had ruffled the smooth surface of her life and caused her some troubled moments of doubt and indecision. She was glad, on the whole, that the affair was ended; nor did she wish to mend the links that she had voluntarily broken. Yet it seemed heartless on his part to have consoled himself so soon. He had loved her so well that she had pictured him living a lonely life and forswearing the society of women for her sake.

Beatrice came down to breakfast with a sunshiny face, determined to bear with all Mr. Redburn's whims and make herself agreeable to everyone in the house. She looked so gloriously happy that Alma, for once in her life, very nearly betrayed the envy that was gnawing at her heart that day. Her morning greeting was a little chilly; her face looked old and worn when the fresh sunlight fell upon it, and Colonel Lindrick thought that his daughter was losing her youth very fast.

There was no walk after breakfast. Mr. Redburn took possession of Beatrice at once; and Alma left her to her fate. But she listened with perfect good-humour to the old man's prosy talk, and wrote some of his letters with the utmost cheerfulness. The world looked so bright just then that it was easy to endure any little nuisance. If Mr. Redburn were cross, why should she mind? He was old. He meant no unkindness by his little sour speeches. It was her duty to be tender and considerate to the poor old invalid who had been her father's friend.

At luncheon, Alma had quite recovered her spirits. The girls walked out in the afternoon, and came home across the sunny, park-like field that gave Meadow House its name.

The field path was a private way, trodden only by the Earles and their friends. It terminated in a narrow alley, hemmed in by shrubs,

and leading out into the high road; and a gate in the laurel-hedge opened into the Earles' grounds.

At this little gate, Alma instinctively paused, being on such friendly terms with her neighbours that they were used to unceremonious meetings. Miss Lindrick was in a most unusually sentimental mood that day. She could not see the hawthorn snows drifting over the grass, nor smell the fresh, intoxicating sweetness of May, without a foolish longing to live old times over again. Here, at this very gate, she had been wont to meet Godwin in the bygone summer evenings when their hopes were high and their hearts young.

Lingering here, they could see the Countess sailing majestically across the lawn, carrying a red sun-shade, and heard her imperious voice calling to her daughter, who was playing with a kitten among the flower-beds. Under the verandah were Dorothy and Jane Earle; the elder, with her knitting in her hands, the younger with a pair of scissors and a flower-basket. Showers of blossoms were falling from over-laden May boughs; the sward was dappled with light shadows; a warm breeze slowly swayed the fading golden tassels of the laburnum. Meadow House was a dreamy, sweet old place, half smothered with flowers and foliage, haunted by birds, steeped in calm and sunshine.

The Countess was the first to see the two loiterers at the gate. She came towards them; large, stately, and warmly cordial.

"You surely are not going away without coming in!" she cried, with outstretched hand. "Miss Ward has not yet seen the garden, and it is looking so pretty now."

As she spoke, her eyes were keenly noting Beatrice's brown tweed suit, and criticising the fair face and tall figure. The two elder sisters, in their dove-coloured gowns, came gliding across the grass, and seconded her invitation.

Aunt Jane seemed disposed to attach herself to Beatrice, unconsciously frustrating the Countess's intentions, as she often did. If she had guessed that Caroline was bent upon engrossing the young girl's attention, she would have given her up meekly enough. But Jane had a perfectly innocent way of thwarting the Countess, and spoiled some of her best-laid little schemes all the more effectually, perhaps, because she did not know what she was doing. She felt a simple kind of pleasure in Beatrice's freshness and beauty, and liked to be near her, much as she liked to be in the neighbourhood of a rose.

"I want you to see my anemones," she said, in quite a confidential tone. "I have just been arranging them in a flower-dish and fringing them with fern. I do not care to leave all my flowers out of doors; I like to have some of them in the room with me."

So saying, she led Miss Ward up the terrace steps, under the verandah, and into the long, low drawing-room. The anemones were worth looking at, delicate cups of the richest scarlet, pink, and

white, in a feathery setting of maidenhair. But there was something else that Beatrice was inwardly pining to see.

She praised the flowers and their arrangement to Jane's full content; and then asked, a little bashfully, if she might look again at that charming view of Birket Foster's, taken from the old bridge? Jane was well pleased to grant the request. These old gentlewomen were justly proud of their pictures; to appreciate any of their choice possessions was to stand high in their favour.

"I think it hangs in a good light," said the old lady, complacently leading the way to the drawing. "The colouring is very soft and delicate, is it not? And one can almost hear the rush of the stream!"

But Beatrice, although she managed to answer intelligently enough, could hear nothing but the loud throbbing of her own heart. And while she seemed to be gazing in rapt admiration at the picture, she did not, in truth, distinguish a single detail. Yet it was not until she had looked steadily at it for a reasonable time, that she ventured to glance at that crayon portrait, close by.

She was alone with Jane Earle. Dorothy and the Countess had taken possession of Alma, and were keeping her with them on the lawn, engaged in a long conversation. The opportunity was too good to be missed.

"That is a sweet boy's face," said Miss Ward, in a voice that trembled a little. And then she gave herself up to the pleasure of gazing her fill. "The eyes are beautiful; but there is a sadness in them that one seldom sees in the eyes of a child."

"He was a happy child enough, but his eyes always had that look," replied Aunt Jane, with a faint sigh. "I remember that some people used to fancy he would not live to grow up."

"But he did live?"

"Oh, yes; he is a man now. But not a very happy man, I am afraid."

Aunt Jane, too, was looking at the portrait, with more expression in her delicate old face than was often seen there. And Beatrice recollected that Godwin had loved Aunt Jane better than any of his other relations, always excepting poor Grace Corder, who died.

CHAPTER XVI.

REMINISCENCES.

"It is a grave matter to bring up a boy," said Jane Earle, after a brief pause. "That portrait was done when Godwin was about seven years old. He was our poor brother's only child—the sweetest little fellow that ever was! I remember him, with his fair hair and gentle face, playing quietly in this very room, or sitting at my feet and

asking for a story. The dearest little companion he always was to me!"

"How you must have loved him!" The words escaped from Beatrice unawares.

"I did love him. Even now, I cannot look at that picture without wishing that he could come back, a little innocent lad, just as he was then! Is it not Cowper who says:

'The meek intelligence of those dear eyes?'

It isn't the fashion to admire Cowper nowadays, I dare say, but he chimes in with my old-fashioned mode of expression. I don't often quote poetry, yet the line seems to describe the look in that portrait."

It was seldom indeed that Jane Earle was betrayed into making such a long speech. But, from the first moment of their meeting, she had been drawn towards Beatrice and felt a sense of ease in her presence. All her life, Jane had been one of those women whose lot it is to be suppressed. She had never had nerve enough to assert herself and her opinions. Moreover, she had always regarded herself as a weak person, who needed guidance. Caroline was the clever woman of the family, and they must all submit to Caroline's superior mind.

"I am sure you must care for him still," said Beatrice, trying to speak composedly. "And he must care for you—he can never forget you."

"We seldom talk of him," Jane answered, with a hurried glance towards the group on the lawn. "He is under a cloud. Things did not go well with him, and we could not help him, poor boy! There was something between him and Alma once—I think it must have been a painful parting. But we must let bygones be bygones—they are all coming in!"

They were indeed. Dorothy, sedate and obtuse as usual; the Countess, with inquisitive tongue; Alma, with her watchful glances; and Olga bringing up the rear with the kitten.

"Why have you been keeping Miss Ward indoors?" Caroline Gradizoff demanded. "Now, that is so like you, Jane! When flowers are growing out in the air and sunshine, people do not care to be shut up in a room to stare at your nosegays. You have a mania for picking things, and sticking them into jars and dishes, and then calling upon everybody to admire your tasteful arrangement!"

"Miss Jane's flowers are perfectly charming," said Beatrice, resenting the tone and manner of the Countess's speech.

Even Dorothy, obtuse as she was, could not help wishing that Caroline would not speak in that way to Jane before strangers. It might give people the impression that there was discord in the Earle family. And she was anxious to appear in a good light before this beautiful girl, who would be a rich woman some day, and might perhaps become a neighbour. Caroline was too trying.

She touched the bell for tea, and began to draw Beatrice into conversation. They all hoped that Miss Ward would make a long stay; there were a great many pretty views to be seen yet. The archery meeting would be coming off soon. Was she fond of archery?

So the old lady babbled pleasantly on, and Beatrice gave fairly correct answers to her various questions, although her mind was straying far away from the talk.

At last, when there was a little lull, she became distinctly conscious that Aunt Dorothy was saying something very important to Miss Lindrick. "I hope, Alma, that you will fix an evening to dine with us. We shall be so glad to see Miss Ward. I suppose Mr. Redburn is too great an invalid to come out, and perhaps the Colonel cannot leave him. But you two will come, I trust?"

"Indeed we should be delighted to come," Alma responded, "if Mr. Redburn would only be reasonable. But he is very exacting, and does not like Beatrice to go out of his sight."

"You must not yield to old people too much," said Dorothy, with a little air of wisdom. "They are often very inconsiderate to the young. We really must have you both here one evening soon. There are many little things that will amuse Miss Ward, I think. The old engravings and all the albums, you know."

"Ah, yes; the dear old albums," said Alma, with a faint sigh. "It seems only yesterday since Godwin and I were turning over their leaves together! How we used to amuse ourselves with the quaint water-colour drawings, all of the most sentimental description! There was a lady in pink bending over a balcony to kiss her hand to a cavalier in green. Poor Godwin used to laugh at the pair."

An awful pause followed these strangely indiscreet words. Alma was perfectly aware that Godwin's name was never mentioned nowadays in the presence of the Countess Gradizoff. But all her usual tact seemed suddenly to have fled.

"You still have a portfolio of his drawings, have you not?" Miss Lindrick continued, addressing the aunts generally. "There was that sketch done in the garden, with Olga standing between the clipped yews. I think he gave it to the Countess. It was very pretty indeed."

Caroline gave a slight shudder, and began to trifle nervously with a paper-knife.

"I don't know where his drawings are," she said, tightening her lips. "Jane has put them somewhere, I suppose. The sight of them would be too painful to me."

"Ah, yes; I was forgetting," rejoined Alma, with a sigh.

The entrance of the servant broke an awkward silence. Beatrice's first draught of tea nearly choked her. She was burning to defend her lover—burning to tell them all that they had disgraced themselves by harbouring cruel suspicions against him. As to the Countess Gradizoff, the girl could hardly conceal her aversion to that hard,

overbearing woman, who had driven Godwin away from the shelter of his old home.

She was heartily glad when Alma rose to say good-bye. Aunt Jane's placid face was not quite as calm as usual when she saw them depart. Her gentle old heart was disquieted within her that day.

The two young women went almost in silence across the velvet lawn, although Olga, who accompanied them, chattered gaily until they reached the shrubbery gate. Then, with many adieux, she ran back to the house, and Alma and Beatrice were left in the perfumed gloom of the laurel walk.

"I am sure you are tired, poor child," said Miss Lindrick at last. "Do you want to go indoors just yet? Mr. Redburn is on the watch, I fear. Let us go and sit in the old summer-house at the bottom of the garden; it is a nice cushiony place, and you can rest there."

Beatrice was afraid that she was destined to hear some unpleasant things in that old summer-house. Of course, Alma shared the belief in Godwin's guilt. But she could not very well refuse the invitation; and so, slowly and gravely, she accompanied Miss Lindrick down the long garden path.

The little bower, with its conical thatched roof and rough wooden walls, was wreathed with ivy and flowering creepers. Through an opening in the larches that grow thickly here, you could catch a glimpse of a church spire, and the slopes of distant hills: a fair picture, delicately framed in quivering foliage. All around the arbour, the sweet common flowers of early summer were in the freshest bloom: great velvety pansies; bloody-warriors standing up in stiff ranks; flowering currant-bushes scenting the air with their delicious country fragrance. It was a pleasant nook to rest in on a sunny afternoon; but Beatrice's throbbing pulses were at war with repose.

The summer-house was cushioned as Alma had said, but her companion was in no mood to recognise its comforts. She seated herself, and looked absently at the larch-boughs, showing their fine outlines against the fair sky.

"Poor Godwin Earle," said Alma, breaking the silence in a gentle voice; "he is an acquaintance of yours, is he not?"

"I know him very well," was the somewhat curt reply.

"Ah, I remember seeing him with you and some friends of yours. But, of course, I did not know that you were intimate with him. His aunts do not like talking about him much, poor fellow! I fancy he has given the old ladies a perpetual heartache."

"I can't believe that the Countess Gradizoff has ever had a heartache," replied Beatrice, coldly; "and Miss Earle and Miss Jane seemed very comfortable, I thought."

"You do not know them as well as I do," Alma said, mournfully. "I have seen them suffer a great deal on his account. But I am the last person in the world to be hard on Godwin. He was very dear to me once, and I was his first love."

She paused; but Beatrice had nothing to say.

"His first love," she repeated pensively. "He will never love another woman as he loved me. We were boy and girl together, and everyone said that we were made for each other in those days."

"But not in these days!" said Beatrice, with a little smile.

"No." Alma did not love her any the better for that smile. "It is rather more than a year since I broke off the engagement. Circumstances compelled me to give him up."

"I daresay you acted wisely," remarked Miss Ward, in an indifferent tone.

"I hope he has found friends and an occupation." Alma was becoming more and more exasperated, although her self-control was perfect. "But if he has made money—and papa thinks that he has—he ought to send some to the Countess Gradizoff. She had a very heavy loss through him. I almost wondered to see him looking well and happy last summer; there must be a burden on his mind, I suppose. But I could not understand his apparent cheerfulness."

"You thought he ought not to be cheerful, perhaps?"

"Well, it seems hard to say that. Yet, if I were in his case, I could not enjoy life till I had made a certain act of restitution."

"He will make it; he is devoting all his energies to getting money. The Countess will be fully compensated for the loss of the necklace."

"Oh, then you know the story of the necklace," said Alma, with a hard look coming suddenly into her face. "That means, of course, that you have heard his version of it?"

Beatrice's temper got the better of her at last. The bitterness in Alma's voice, the base insinuation conveyed in her words, were more than Godwin Earle's betrothed could bear with patience.

She drew herself up haughtily, looking a magnificent embodiment of youth and vigour, and dwarfing into insignificance the pinched face and figure by her side.

"I have heard the truth," she answered, proudly. "I know that he has been the most unfortunate and most unjustly accused of men. The people here may say and think what they choose, but they will never shake my faith in my promised husband!"

"Oh, I was not aware that there was an engagement," said Alma, with a polite little sneer. "If I had known, I should, of course, have been on my guard. But you are young; and it would have been wiser, perhaps, if you had heard both sides of that painful story."

"I am perfectly satisfied," returned Beatrice, coldly; and she rose without another word and turned towards the house.

As she walked steadily up that long garden path, her eyes were dazzled by the low sunlight. The vivid gold on shrubs and bushes smote her almost painfully after the soft shade of the arbour; and the scents of wallflowers and sweetbriar had lost their sweetness. It

seemed as if a great deal had happened in that afternoon; although in truth nothing fresh had come to her, save a new revelation of cruel injustice.

She was glad that Alma walked behind her in silence. Any words spoken at that moment between these two women must have been bitter words.

Shadows were beginning to creep about Beatrice's young life—to creep higher and higher till they reached her heart and rested there for many a day. She did not doubt, for one moment, the man she had trusted; but she had begun to realise, for the first time, that nothing on earth has so many foes as a true love.

CHAPTER XVII.

COLONEL LINDRICK SPEAKS OUT.

A LITTLE quiet time in her own room and the business of dressing for dinner restored Beatrice's composure in some degree. She went downstairs in her pretty, soft silk gown, resolved to make the best of things while she was a guest at Oak Lodge, and equally resolved that her stay here should be as short as possible.

Her efforts to make everything agreeable were bravely seconded by her hostess. Both girls talked brightly all through dinner. The two old men were charmed with Beatrice's intelligence; Alma, herself, secretly applauded the girl for her spirit. The evening passed off exceedingly well, and Beatrice retired early that she might write her letters in solitude.

Mr. Redburn had been accommodated with a bed-room and dressing-room on the most sheltered side of the house. A good deal of the morning was generally spent in the dressing-room, where he breakfasted, wrapped in a luxurious Oriental robe, and idled away his time, in invalid fashion, till the luncheon hour. If the morning was showery, or if there was an east wind, his servant carried refreshments upstairs, and the old man did not appear till later in the day.

It was no surprise to Mr. Redburn to see his host enter the dressing-room after breakfast with his hands full of morning papers. Colonel Lindrick thoroughly understood the art of managing invalids. He always had something cheerful to say, some bit of news to tell, some good story to amuse the weary sufferer. Tough and wiry himself, and used to all sorts of climates, he could endure the atmosphere of a close room without much discomfort. His nerves, too, were excellent, enabling him to bear the frequent fits of coughing with perfect equanimity and indifference.

"Splendid weather for you to-day," he said, coming over to the wrapped-up figure in the cushioned chair, just as the dutiful Blake was taking away the remains of the solitary breakfast. "The softest

of westerly winds, hardly enough to set the leaves quivering. You must get out for a little walk in the sun. I see you are looking much better."

"I am better," old Redburn admitted. "The air of this place suits me very well."

"Oh, you are picking up fast; Bendall finds a great improvement," said Colonel Lindrick airily, while Blake carried the tray out of the room and shut the door. "Not much in the paper, is there?"

"Not much. Yes, I certainly do feel stronger," said the old man, returning to the beloved topic of his health. "I've had a good night, and my cough is quieter. As you say, a walk in the sun will do me good. Beatrice must come with me, and we will potter about on the lawn before luncheon."

"Ah, yes, Beatrice is a charming companion," Colonel Lindrick said in his pleasant way. "How well she talked last night; has read a great deal, hasn't she? Do you know, by the way, that Alma made a discovery yesterday?"

"What did she discover? Anything to do with Beatrice?"

"Very much to do with her. Girls never can keep their secrets long from each other, you know; and Alma, poor little woman, is quite concerned. She is afraid she has offended Beatrice by speaking slightingly of her lover."

"Beatrice has no lover. She is a mere baby."

"A very fine baby," said the Colonel, laughing. "We could not expect her to keep free from danglers. But, seriously, I wish she had engaged herself to a worthier man."

"Engaged herself!" repeated the old man, furiously. "Why wasn't I told of this sooner? Engaged! What could that Milton woman have been doing?"

"Don't be angry, Redburn," his friend said soothingly. "It is right, of course, that you should know all about the affair. Alma told me everything last night. She is very fond of Beatrice, and really anxious for her good."

"Begin at the beginning, Lindrick," cried Redburn impatiently. "In the first place, let me know who the man is? And how did he cross her path."

"I can answer the first question, but not the second. The man is an old lover of my daughter's. At my request, she dropped him altogether last year. His name is Earle—Godwin Earle—nephew of the old ladies in Meadow House."

"And, after being dropped by your daughter, he comes sneaking up to Beatrice, does he? What do you know about him?"

"I don't want to injure him," replied the Colonel, in a reluctant tone; "but it is only fair to tell you why I made Alma cut him. She is a sensible girl, and gave me no trouble in the matter."

And then followed the story of the missing necklace, told in Colonel Lindrick's brief, effective style. Such a tale, narrated in such a manner, could have but one effect on a man who had already resolved that Beatrice should have no husband who was not of his choosing.

"Miss Ward is young, even for her nineteen years," ended the Colonel, in a kindly voice. "She has never seen anything of the world. Is it any wonder that she believes implicity in the first man who makes love to her?"

"She will have to give him up," said Mr. Redburn, shortly. "I won't look on and let her make a fool of herself."

"It will not be easy to influence her. She is as high-spirited as she is beautiful. I have never seen a girl I admire so much. By George, if I were thirty years younger, I would go in for her myself!"

"I wish to heaven that you *were* thirty years younger! It would take a great deal to make me cast off poor Ward's daughter, after having made up my mind to adopt her. But I swear to you, Lindrick, that not one shilling of mine shall ever go to a man with a stained name! Her father, poor fellow, would have soon put a stop to this affair if he had lived."

"I can only hope that she will listen to reason. Poor Alma's words had no weight with her at all," said the Colonel, shaking his head.

"She ought to have frankly told me that she had a lover," muttered the old man, fretfully. "Her father's oldest friend and representative was to be kept in the dark, it seems! The Miltons have not done their duty. They must have looked after her very badly."

"Don't say that to her, Redburn. If you do, she will be as hard to move as a rock. Why, she simply worships that woman who was her governess! Alma says that Mrs. Milton's influence is unbounded. It is a pity, a great pity, that she has not had another kind of training."

These words added fuel to the flame of Mr. Redburn's wrath. He was already jealous of Beatrice's attachment to Harriet. His was the ungovernable, unreasoning jealousy of the autocrat who wants to order all things with an omnipotent hand and hates the shadow of a rival power. Living for years in almost kingly style among a conquered people, he had yet to learn that it was possible for his commands to be disobeyed.

"I shall not let the child take her own way unchecked!" he cried. "I shall say just the things that ought to be said! Bless my soul, Lindrick, do you suppose I am going to be silenced by a Miss in her teens? Eh? What? Upon my soul! It's monstrous, sir; monstrous. The whole thing is brought about by the devilish mismanagement of those Miltons! And I'm not to mention them, I suppose? I'm to hold my tongue out of deference to my lady?

Do you know what you are talking about? I shall speak my mind, sir; I shall speak my ——"

A violent fit of coughing put an end to this tirade. And it occurred to Colonel Lindrick that his friend would not have many more opportunities of speaking his mind if he went on at that rate. He immediately began to put out all his powers of soothing.

"It will all come right," he said, reassuringly. "She does not know her own heart yet. Girls of her age change their lovers twenty times a-year. Let her see more of men, more of the world and its ways; that is the best cure for sentimental nonsense of any kind. I am half sorry that I came here and worried you about the matter."

"You—could not—have—done otherwise." Mr. Redburn panted out the sentence with a great effort.

"Well, well, I did what I thought best. Alma thought I ought to speak, and she is a clear-headed girl. Naturally, she does not like to look calmly on and see her young friend getting deeper and deeper into a muddle. But it will be all right, I tell you; all right."

"I wish Beatrice had a tenth part of Alma's common sense," said Mr. Redburn, somewhat calmed.

"Ah, there are very few women who have such a respect for a father's judgment as Alma has. Even from a child, she would always let herself be guided. I left her in my sister's care while I was in India; and I must say she was admirably trained. No heroics, no high-flown ideas. She has never given me a moment's anxiety."

"You are a lucky man to have such a daughter. By Jove, Lindrick, I wish I had married and had a child of my own. It's poor work, making money and leaving it to hospitals and that sort of thing. More satisfactory, you know, to leave it to a pretty young woman, if she will only behave herself properly."

"But not satisfactory, you know, to leave it to a young man who has not behaved himself properly? If you left it to her, in her present frame of mind, you would be leaving it to him too."

"He shall never touch a shilling of my mine! Upon my soul, Lindrick, I'd rather be ——"

"Of course, of course! Very right and natural. Now, take my advice; just quiet yourself, and then come down and call Beatrice to walk with you in the garden. You'll bring her to her senses, never fear."

"Do you really think so? Do you think she is seriously in love with that confounded rascal?"

"Do I think any girl of nineteen is ever seriously in love? Introduce fifty more confounded rascals to her, and if they happened to be fairly good looking, she would be sweet upon everyone of them. Earle is the only man she has ever seen much of. As yet, no one has tried to put him out of her head. Upon my word, Redburn, I had no idea that you were going to regard this little affair so gravely."

So saying, Colonel Lindrick rose and went away, leaving the old

man to believe that he had an easy task before him. Outside the door, his face changed and grew haggard and worn in a moment. His daughter met him in the corridor, and they paused together at one of the windows, speaking in low voices and with cautious glances around.

"Are you sure of her firmness, Alma?" asked the Colonel, anxiously.

"Quite sure, papa. She is the most obstinate girl I have ever known. Nothing on earth will make her give Godwin up. She does not care for money in the least. I never saw anyone so extraordinary!"

"She will have to choose between her lover and a fortune, Alma. I am certain of that."

"She will not hesitate a moment. And if Mr. Redburn provokes her too far, she will run away."

"He will provoke her to any extent," said the Colonel, grimly. "You must not let her see any change in your manner, remember."

"Whatever happens, I am going to be sweet and sympathising. But I shall be very glad when all this is over, and she is really gone, never to come back anymore. It is a wearysome business."

"But we shall reap the fruits by-and-bye. You are looking tired, Alma; keep up your spirits. You will know what to do with old Redburn's money when it comes to you."

"I shall know how to take care of it," said Alma, quietly.

No one who had seen the tight shutting of Miss Lindrick's lips and marked the hard outlines of her aquiline nose and prominent chin would have doubted her ability to take care of money. And certainly no man, however near and dear to her, would ever succeed in luring her into spendthrift ways. In her hands, Mr. Redburn's fortune would be safe indeed.

Just then, a bell was heard to ring in the invalid's room; and father and daughter parted in haste. Blake was summoned to dress his master.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT OAK LODGE.

THE birds were twittering, chattering and fluttering about the flowery boughs in Colonel Lindrick's garden, and Beatrice was pacing up and down the walks with a musing look on her face. A night's sleep had restored her spirits, but it had by no means quenched the burning desire to leave Fairbridge and return to town. The songs of the birds and the peace and beauty of the sunshine and the hour stole into the girl's heart and made her feel that it was good to live. And yet—

> "The cuckoo-throb, the heart-beat of the spring;
> The rose-bud's blush that leads it as it grows
> Into the full-eyed, fair, unblushing rose;"

all this delight and sweetness were incomplete without the companionship that was most to be desired on earth.

"Mr. Redburn is asking for you," said Alma, breaking in upon her solitude with an apologetic smile. "I am so sorry to disturb you; I see that you are reading."

But Beatrice, although an open book was in her hand, had not read a single line. She smiled back at Alma, and obeyed the unwelcome summons with a good grace.

As she came up the walk with sunbeams and leaf-shadows flickering over her face and figure, the two old men stood watching her on the lawn. Both were struck with that girlish dignity of hers; both estimated at its full value the morning freshness of her beauty.

"It would be a thousand pities for such a girl to throw herself away on Earle," whispered the Colonel to his friend. "It must not be!—by Jove, it must not be!"

"It *shall* not be," was the answer, in a low growl of determination.

"I shall take her in hand at once, Lindrick, and put an end to all that preposterous nonsense for ever."

Beatrice wondered what was meant by "preposterous nonsense?" She had caught the two words, but did not guess that they were applied to any affair of hers. Looking quietly happy after her saunter among the flowers, she came towards Mr. Redburn wtth a pleasant good-morning.

"Good-morning, my dear," he responded, rather gruffly; "you and I are going to take a little stroll about the grounds and have a talk—a very serious talk."

Even then she did not in the least suspect the subject of that very serious talk. She moved on contentedly, walking by his side, with her well-set head lifted a little, listening to the birds' songs; and his shambling old figure serving as a foil to her stateliness and grace.

"Beatrice," he began solemnly; "attention, my dear, if you please."

She had lifted her hand to a sweet-briar bush to pull off a twig, but at these words she let it drop meekly at her side and turned her sweet face towards him with a deferential air.

"Beatrice, I received a communication this morning which has surprised and annoyed me beyond measure. Yesterday, it seems, you openly announced the fact of your engagement; an engagement which must fill every well-wisher of yours with the deepest regret."

He paused, feeling that he had made a good beginning and expressed himself with calmness and dignity. She was startled for a moment; it had not occurred to her that Miss Lindrick would repeat their conversation to Mr. Redburn. But, after all, why should he be kept in ignorance of a thing that he would have to know sooner or later? She answered him in a tone of perfect composure:

"I am sorry that anyone should regret my happiness."

"Your happiness! By George, Beatrice, this is too much for any man to stand! Your happiness, indeed! Do you think you are going to be made happy by marrying a rascal? Do you think I will look on and see poor Ward's daughter fling herself away on a thief? Do you suppose ——"

"Stop!" she said, her clear young voice ringing out imperiously above his thick, angry tones. "Stop, if you don't wish me to forget the respect due to my father's old friend."

She was as white as marble. Her deep-blue eyes, heavily fringed with dark-brown lashes, shone out strangely. There was such a queenliness in her look and tone that for an instant the old tyrant was cowed before her.

But only for an instant. His wrath burst out again, all the hotter for that momentary repression.

"How dare you, you insolent child!" he shouted. "If your father were here at this moment, he would order you away to your room and lock you up till you would listen to reason. But you shan't ruin yourself if I can help it. You shall hear all that there is to be said about that scoundrel, who has deluded you with his lying tales."

He stopped, not for want of words, but for want of breath. She took advantage of the pause to speak, quietly and coldly.

"Mr. Redburn, I am not ungrateful for your kind intentions. But let me say now, once for all, that it will be best for you to forget my very existence. Let us tread separate ways. If we meet often, we shall only irritate each other. You cannot reasonably expect to order my life after such a short acquaintance."

"That's true," he answered, with unexpected calmness. "I ought to have come home sooner to have looked after poor Ward's child. It serves me right if she gives herself airs. Now, look here, Beatrice. I'm ready to have patience with you. But you musn't fly into a rage when I say that these Milton people are awfully to blame. They let you engage yourself to the first man who was caught by your pretty face. What did they know of this fellow Earle?"

"He was introduced to them by Mr. Milton's oldest friend—a Mr. Corder. Mr. Corder's son married a Miss Earle," replied Beatrice, with cold distinctness.

"Oh, indeed. And did the Miltons ever hear the story of the Countess Gradizoff's ruby necklace?"

"No. But Godwin Earle told the whole story, first to Mr. Corder and afterwards to me."

"You poor deluded baby! He told the tale after his own fashion. As Alma Lindrick says, you have heard only one side."

"Mr. Redburn, let me say again that it will be best for us to part," said the girl, struggling hard for composure. "Do not let us talk about this matter any more. To the last day of my life, I shall believe in Godwin's innocence, whether that innocence is proved not. Nothing will ever change me."

The old man's face looked sadly drawn and haggard in the fresh light of morning. Absurd and unreasonable as his expectations were, he had in truth expected the obedience of a daughter from Beatrice Ward. Finding her so fresh and fair, he had centred all his hopes in her, and she had become, as the Lindricks well knew, the great interest in his fast-declining life.

"Let me go back to my home," she continued, gently. "Why should I stay here and quarrel with you? You don't understand me; you can't realise how miserable it is to live with people who believe these cruel untruths about the man I love. Forget me, and find some other girl who will be grateful for your benefits and submissive to your will. I am not submissive, and I can't even be grateful."

While she was speaking, a new expression had dawned in the eyes that were closely watching her. A sudden thought had flashed into the old man's brain. He could now see such a clear light shining on the difficulty that he could afford to speak in an indulgent tone.

"I can't so easily resign my adopted daughter," he said, with an affectionate air that touched her. "For the present, however, we will let this subject rest. I am a shattered old man, and have to pay dearly for exciting myself. Now I shall go to my room and try to get composed. You will not see me at luncheon."

He turned away, leaving her under a hawthorn that shed its fragrant snows upon her head. Standing in the shade, and following him with pitying eyes, she saw him go pottering towards the house with all possible speed. How feeble he was, and how cruel it seemed to put him into a passion! She was ready to blame herself for losing her temper with anyone so sickly and frail.

A distant clock struck eleven. It was good to know that she might count upon two whole hours of solitude and peace.

Turning her back to the house, she went quickly down the flowery path that led to the old summer-house. Here, indeed, there was perfect quietness and repose, but after sitting still for a few seconds, she remembered that Alma might come in search of her. In her present mood, an interview with her hostess was the very thing that she could not bear with patience. If Alma had but kept silence, this painful scene with Mr. Redburn might have been spared her.

Just outside the summer-house was a gate which opened out upon the high road. It was locked; but the key was in the lock, and in a moment more Beatrice was beyond the Lindricks' grounds and at liberty.

The May morning was as warm as many a day in June. She wen on and on, exulting in the air and sunlight, and making straight for that narrow lane which would lead her to the ivy-grown bridge. Here she paused, finding a strange charm in the spot, and resting her arms on the mossy brickwork, she looked down thoughtfully into the waters that went hurrying along below.

The stream seemed to murmur to her of a time when a boy's feet

had paused there and a boy's heart had danced to its music. The freshness of its song was unchanged, the merry rush of its waters was as gladsome as ever; but the laughter that used to blend with its tone was gone.

In those bygone days of his bright youth, she had not known Godwin Earle. It had been reserved for her to meet the way-worn, weary man, and bless him with the full sweetness of a woman's first love. And so true and deep was this love of hers, that she craved of heaven no higher boon than to walk always by his side to the journey's end.

On each side of the stream were the wooded banks, rich with the purple and gold of May-time and fresh with glorious green. It was lovely to see the soft spots of colour showing here and there among long grass and drooping boughs—lovely to watch the lights flashing on the hasty tide. The song of the waters and the charm of the place soothed her troubled spirit and gave her peace.

She was moving slowly on again, when a tall, elderly lady, carrying a basket full of cowslips, came to meet her with a placid smile. It startled her a little to find herself face to face with Jane Earle. But one glance at that undisturbed countenance assured her that Aunt Jane had heard nothing unusual. She had been taking a morning walk in the lanes and meadows, and was returning laden with spoils.

"I am enjoying this early summer-time," said the old lady, contentedly. "Did you ever see such a wealth of cowslips as we have this year? And they are so fine, too?"

"Beautiful," replied Beatrice, bending over the basket. But she was not thinking of the yellow flowers that breathed sweetly on her face. She was wondering at Aunt Jane's unbroken serenity. How could she find life so pleasant when the boy whom she had loved was banished from his home for ever?

"You would have missed all this sweetness if you had stayed in town," continued Jane, cheerfully. "Are you not very glad to be here?"

But the question, coming at that moment, was more than Beatrice could bear.

Giving one hasty glance at the speaker, she suddenly burst into tears, and sobbed out a passionate answer.

"Oh, no, no! I wish that I had never left London. I wish—with all my soul—that I could go home this very day!"

"My dear Miss Ward, forgive me—pray forgive me," said the old lady, in pained surprise. "I had no idea that my words would give such distress."

(To be continued.)

A REVERIE.

THE glory of a summer moon
  Shed all her silver on the night,
On woods that wore the wealth of June,
  And lordly turrets tipped with light ;
A hush was in the hazelbrake,
  And if a murmur met the ear,
'Twas where the lily-fleeted lake
  Dashed foaming down the whitened weir.

A many-tinted iris spanned
  The moss-greened gulf and lichens grey ;
Dark cedar groves on either hand,
  Were sprinkled with the opal spray ;
A mist from off the pine-clad hills
  Stole like a sheeted spectre by ;
The dewy breath of daffodils
  Came from a kine-cropped pasture nigh.

An aspen on the terrace walk
  Found not a breath to fan its leaves ;
The night is still ; no spirits talk
  Beneath the ivied arbour eaves ;
The sighing of the reeds, at most,
  Was all the listener could discern,
Although he knew an antlered host
  Was ambushed in the scented fern.

The night is still, all nature sleeps,
  Her tent the turquoise-tinted skies ;
Few stars are forth—the azure deeps
  Unveil them not to mortal eyes ;
A solemn Presence seems to pass
  Along the silent realms of space ;
Unseen, unheard, unknown, alas !
  To beings of a fallen race.

I passed from out the festive halls
  To gaze upon a fairer scene,
And linger on the loopholed walls,
  Where musingly I loved to lean ;
To commune with the quiet night,
  And yield to its entrancing power,
And, pacing the embattled height,
  Breathe all the beauty of the hour.

LINDON MEADOWS.

M. ELLEN STAPLES. R. TAYLOR.

"Oh, Gertrude! don't say me nay again!"

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIII.

AT GREAT WHITTON.

THE trees at Great Whitton grew bright with the tender green of spring, and the hedges were budding into leaf. Gertrude Baumgarten was slowly walking through one of the country lanes towards Avon House, enjoying the freshness of the morning. The sun shone, the skies were blue and unclouded, the air felt warm almost as that of a summer's day, and the birds sang with a rapture that is so exhilarating on these days when all nature is springing into new life and beauty.

Gertrude had been into the village. She looked fair and lovely as ever; more lovely, perhaps, than her mother had looked before her, for her face was a less proud one. Proud enough it was, but not as Lady Grace's had been; and latterly Gertrude's had assumed a somewhat sad expression, as if she were not altogether as happy as of o'd.

Leaning over the small wicket which was placed only a few yards from the large iron gates at Avon House, stood Lord Avon, looking at her as she advanced. He had been living at his place all the spring, and his sister, Lady Grace, with her daughter, Gertrude, had for the last few weeks been staying with him. The Earl was the same good-natured man he had ever been, and looked very little altered. His locks were more scanty than of yore, and a few silver threads might be seen amongst them, but in all else he appeared unchanged.

"You are back at last, Gertrude!"

"At last?" she repeated. "Why? Have you wanted me, Uncle Avon?"

"Not at all. But I have been watching for you for an age. What are you carrying in that small parcel?"

"Feminine matters in which you can scarcely be interested," laughed Gertrude. "I've been matching silks in the village for my screen work, and it took me a long time, for I wanted many shades. Then I went on to see old Mrs. Whittaker, who grows more deaf and crotchety day by day."

Lord Avon opened the gate for Gertrude, and she passed through. She now stood by his side, whilst he, leaning over it as before, appeared to be gazing at the far distance.

"Are you watching for someone else, Uncle Henry?"

"No," replied Lord Avon; "I was only thinking, Gertrude. I am going down to the Rectory presently; your mother wants me to ask them to come in to dinner."

"Oh, pray do," said Gertrude. "It will make it less dull for them, and for us ——. I wish you would tell me something," she continued, after a pause.

"Well? What do you want to know?" he enquired, certain in his own mind as to the nature of her request.

"The letter you were reading at the breakfast-table—I chanced to see the writing, you remember, and said it was from Charles; upon which you put it hastily into your pocket, telling me that I saw too much and too quickly. It *was* from Charles, was it not?"

"Yes. You were quite right."

"Then why did you rush it away in that fashion, and pretend that I was mistaken, Uncle Henry?"

"Because I wished not to draw your mother's attention to it. I did not altogether understand the letter, and wanted to go over it again alone. Charley has been getting into a mess."

"What sort of a mess?" asked Gertrude.

"All sorts of messes," replied his lordship. "He was seen at the play one night in strange company. Again, the old Bishop of Denham, calling at his chambers, found some very unorthodox pen-and-ink sketches on his blotting-pad. Charley forthwith went down in his lordship's estimation, and lost some work the Bishop had just offered him. I should like to have seen the good man's face," broke off Lord Avon, laughing.

"But is that all?" asked Gertrude. "It does not seem a very terrible affair, if there is nothing more behind it."

"It certainly sounds rather like a case of Much ado about nothing," assented the Earl. "But it is not quite all. Charles has been going in largely for jewellery, and can't, or won't, pay for it."

"It is very unlike Charles to do that," said Gertrude.

"The singular point in it is that Charles altogether denies it," continued Lord Avon. "He protests to me that he has not done anything of the kind; and thinks that someone must have been personating him, either in jest or else as an out-and-out fraud."

"Is the bill for jewellery a heavy one?"

"Nearly a hundred pounds."

"A hundred pounds!" exclaimed Gertrude. "I cannot believe it. What is your own opinion, Uncle Henry? Do you think Charley has done all this, or that someone—as he calls it—has been personating him?"

"Shouldn't care to go too closely into that question," said his easy lordship. "Shouldn't have the smallest doubt upon the point myself, but for one thing; Charley has hitherto been the very quintessence of truth and honour."

"Of course he is, and always has been, and always will be," cried Grace, warmly. "He is not likely to change now. Uncle Avon, Charles would never buy jewellery that he could not pay for. As to the play—I suppose they mean that he went to it with some fast young men—perhaps had been dining with them. I dare say he couldn't help himself."

"That's just it," said Lord Avon. "It is so easy for young fellows living in London to slide unconsciously into debt and all manner of trouble ——. Do you see that hill?" he added, pointing a little way to the left.

"Whitton Beacon? Yes. But what has that to do with Charley?"

"When I was a youngster, I and some other lads used to go to the top of that mound, and slide down it. Once off, no earthly power could have stopped us until we reached the bottom. So is it with young fellows like Charley; once in for a thing, it is almost impossible to pull up. In this instance I dare say he bought chains and rings at different times, never pausing to think that in the end the sum would mount up to a formidable item."

"Does he ask you to help him? Is that his reason for writing?"

"Not at all. He distinctly disowns any motive of the kind; does not intend to pay the bill himself, or to allow anyone else to pay it for him. He says he knows that Dr. Dynevor is about to acquaint me with the whole affair, and wishes to give me first of all his own version of it. Amongst other changes, the engagement with Mary is broken off."

"But that is serious," exclaimed Gertrude, much troubled. "It will ruin both their lives. Who has done it?"

"Dr. Dynevor, and on account of these matters. I'm sorry for Charley, and suppose I must see into it," concluded the Earl, passing at length through the gate. "If I find he has imposed this fine tale of innocence upon me, I shall be more angry with him than I ever was before in my life. Don't speak of it to your mother, Gertrude. Now I must be off to the Rectory."

He walked away. Gertrude went slowly up the garden and crossed to a natural arbour formed by the interlacing trees, and there sat down on a bench overshadowed by the flowering lilac and drooping laburnum. Removing her straw hat, and letting it hang from her arm by its long blue streamers, she began to think of Charles. She wished Lord Avon had shown her the letter; but he had declined

to do so. A faint sound of voices came to her through the open window of the drawing-room; someone must have called and was talking with her mother.

"Perhaps it is Mr. Brice," she thought, alluding to the old doctor, who was attending Lady Grace. "He must be back from London, I think. He ran up for a few hours, he said, and that's two days ago." But it was not on Mr. Brice, or on anyone else likely to call, that Gertrude's mind lingered; it was on this new trouble of Charles's, and what it might or might not involve in the future.

"If she and Charles should part for good, would Everard return to her?" shyly wondered Gertrude, with flushing cheeks. "He said ——Why——Who is this?"

She half rose in her astonishment. Strolling down the broad path from the house came Sir Everard Wilmot. Could it be he? Gertrude gazed as one in a dream.

He went as far as the little gate, over which she and Lord Avon had recently been leaning, stood there for a minute looking out, and then returned. When opposite Gertrude's arbour, he caught sight of the soft folds of a muslin dress, and turned quickly. Gertrude felt greatly agitated. Sir Everard walked across the lawn, and held out his hand.

"I am so much surprised," she said, as her own hand met his, and her lovely face turned to rose colour. "I had not even heard that you were expected."

"I came down from London this morning," he answered, as he took his seat beside her. "When Avon was last in town he invited me to come to him for a day or two. Having nothing particularly on hand just now, I thought the occasion too good to be lost."

He paused, looking earnestly at Gertrude, who felt her nervousness increasing.

"You are not sorry to see me, Miss Baumgarten?"

"Oh, no; why should I be sorry?" fluttered Gertrude. "We must all be glad to see you, for it is dull here. I often wish myself away."

"Are *you* glad to see me?" he asked more pointedly.

"Oh yes! I am—very glad," said Gertrude, hesitating, and again blushing violently. "And mamma and Uncle Avon will be especially so."

A moment's silence. Then Sir Everard took possession of the hand again, and bent a little forward, his face, slightly agitated, turned to hers.

"I am given to plain speaking, as you may remember, Gertrude; I cannot beat about the bush with fine phrases, as some men can," he said. "My dear, I came here to-day with one sole object—that of asking you to be my wife. Oh, Gertrude! don't say me nay again!"

She bent her head and her changing face, but gave him no other answer.

"Don't you care for me, Gertrude?" he continued, sadly. "Cannot you care for me?"

And, what with surprise, perplexity and agitation, Miss Baumgarten lost all her dignity, and burst into tears.

Somehow he did not regard it as a bad omen. Perhaps he was an expert at interpreting signs and tokens. However that might be, he put his arm round her and drew her gently to him.

"My darling!" he whispered with impassioned fervour. "I see that you will not send me away." And Gertrude bent her face still lower as she murmured:

"Perhaps you have not heard?—Mary Dynevor and Charles—their engagement is broken off."

He gathered her meaning at once.

"Gertrude, don't you know me better than that?" he rejoined. "Did you not know, did you not see in the past days, that it was not Mary Dynevor I loved, but you? When you refused me, refused even to listen to a word I would have spoken, I turned to Mary in—I fear I must say it—vexation of soul. My dear, why did you treat me so?"

Should she ever be able to tell him? Not yet, at any rate. She had mistaken his frequent visits to the sick daughter of a lady staying in the place, friends of her own and of Lady Grace. A foolish, gossiping woman had whispered to Gertrude that Mr. Wilmot was paying so much attention to this young sick lady that their engagement was an absolute certainty. Gertrude believed it, and became at once so resentfully jealous that when Mr. Wilmot, not long afterwards, spoke to her, in her pride she retaliated upon him with indignation. No, she could not tell him all this to-day, or speak of the sore repentance which had ever since lain upon her.

She drew herself to the end of the bench, put her hat on decorously, and essayed to converse upon indifferent topics: the beauty of the day, the scent of the lilac, the song of the birds. "Do you see that laburnum?" she asked, scarcely knowing what she said. "It is my favourite tree; the most beautiful of all trees; the most graceful of all blossoms."

"Yes," he replied; "I almost agree with you. The country people call it 'gold chain' down with us," he added, smiling.

"Down with you?"

"In the county where my home is; the fairest county in the heart of England. Soon to be your home also, I hope, Gertrude. My darling, may the chains that bind our future lives together be as fair and golden as those of your favourite blossom."

"Does Uncle Henry know you are here?" she suddenly asked.

"Why, of course he does. I was with him for half-an-hour before he went out."

"I wonder he did not tell me you were here."

"He no doubt thought he would leave it for me to tell you. I

have his best wishes, Gertrude; and your mother's also. Ah, my dear, you can find no excuse for turning from me now."

Gertrude rose. He placed her hand on his arm and they walked together up the path. Lady Grace looked at them from the window with a smile of welcome. Sir Everard nodded to her.

A remembrance rushed into Lady Grace's heart, and a flood of tears to her eyes. Just so, in that very garden, in the days long gone by, had *she* loved and listened. Listened and loved and yielded to the impassioned vows of him who had alone made a heaven of her life—Gertrude's father, Ryle Baumgarten.

CHAPTER XIV.

SURPRISES.

HAND locked in hand, they stood together in the dusk of evening at the chambers in Pump Court, gazing into one another's eyes—Cyras and Charles Baumgarten.

It was the evening after Charles's ignominious exit from the house of Dr. Dynevor. He had been busy all day; had been in court, the junior counsel in an insignificant case; had made one at a consultation at Lincoln's Inn; had been occupied in other ways. The only personal thing he had found time to do for himself was to write the letter spoken of in the last chapter to Lord Avon. And now, the day's work over, and his dinner over, he was mentally deliberating as to whether he should at once apply to the police for counsel in his curious dilemma, or wait and see what the next day or two would bring forth—when he heard the sound of a visitor approaching.

A gentleman of free and easy manners had run up the stairs to the door which bore on it the name of "Mr. Charles Baumgarten." Knocking with the silver head of his very elegant cane, he had stood humming a tune until the summons was answered by the boy, Joe. "Master in?" he cried airily, and walked forward without waiting for a reply, as if he knew his way about the chambers as well as Joe himself did. The boy stared in amazement; he had never seen two people so much alike as this gentleman and his master.

"Charley, lad!" Joe heard him say in salutation.

The resemblance was certainly wonderful. Height, figures, features, even the voices were the same. Only in the expression of the two countenances a difference might be seen. That of Cyras was gay, light, laughing, as if he had never in his whole life heard of a thing called care; that of Charles was thoughtful and rather sad. And their resemblance to their late father, the Dean of Denham, was as great as it was to one another.

"Don't you know me, Charley?"

Intense surprise had struck Charles dumb.

"Yes, I know you, Cyras, my brother; but I can't believe yet that it is really you."

"There's no mistaking the likeness," laughed Cyras. "Look at yourself in the glass, and then look at me. Folks might vow we were twins. You are silent with surprise, Charley."

"I am more than surprised: I am bewildered. Sit down. How long have you been in England?"

"A few weeks. But most of it has been spent in Paris, not in England. I've been sticking to work like a brick for a long time, and I thought I had earned a holiday; so I came over to the old country, to see you all. When I arrived I found you had all flown in different directions: you gone on circuit, and Berkeley Square shut up."

"They are staying at Great Whitton with Uncle Avon. You should have sent us word that you were coming, Cyras."

"I couldn't. I steamed away from Wellington the very same day that I made up my mind to come over. The fact is, Charley, I—but I need not bother you by going into everything," added Cyras. "How is the dear mother?"

"Quite well."

"And Gertrude? Is she as pretty as ever? Any chance of her getting spliced?"

"You should keep Colonial terms for Colonial life," quoth Charles. "Spliced!"

"All right," promptly returned Cyras. "Is there any prospect of the fair Miss Baumgarten's being led to the hymeneal altar?"

Charles stopped his ears. "That's worse, Cyras!" And they both laughed.

"Answer my question, Charley. What of Gertrude?"

"Well, I—can't say anything for certain," hesitated Charles. "But I should not very much wonder if we heard of a wedding before very long."

Cyras became serious. He was aroused to interest in his sister, of whom he had always been especially fond. "I hope it's something good, Charley."

"Good in every way, if it turn out to be fact. Plenty of money, and an admirable man. He likes her, I think, and she—more than likes him. It is Everard Wilmot."

"Everard Wilmot," repeated Cyras, in surprise. "Once attached to the embassy in Paris?"

"The same."

"I know him, then. He'll do."

"How can you have known him?" asked Charles. "He was in Paris only for a short time and it's ever so many years ago. You must have been about seventeen."

"Not quite as young as that, Charley. I took a flying escapade without leave, over to Paris, with John Sherron, angering —" his face flushed, and he spoke in a low tone and with deep feeling—

"my dear father. You knew nothing of it; you were at Eton: Gertrude knew, and so did Lady Grace. In Paris I saw Wilmot, but did not become acquainted with him."

"You don't know much of him, then."

"Wait a bit. Not much; no. After that—later—Wilmot was over in Wellington, where I did make his acquaintance. What's more, I was able to render him a service, which I know he has not forgotten to this day."

"What was it?"

"Don't ask me, Charley, for I can't tell you. I promised him then I would never speak of it, and I never shall. Not that there was anything dishonourable to him in the affair, but the contrary. If Gertrude has chosen him, she has done well."

"There's nothing certain about it yet, I fancy. Only, a hint was whispered to me that —— *Cyras!*" burst out Charles, as an idea flashed across him. "It was you who came to my rooms here the night before last! It was you who pilfered the key from my old laundress."

Cyras nodded. "I took the key from her hand, and let myself in with it. The woman took me for you; I saw that and kept up the joke. And when I got in, Charley, I found only empty rooms; no one to welcome me."

"But you need not have played up Old Harry with them, Cyras; turned the drawers inside out, and ornamented the blotting-pad to the Bishop of Denham's pious horror and my own confusion."

"The blotting-pad! Oh, I left that as a memento of my visit; I had no card-case with me," laughed Cyras. "And for the drawers, I had only a fancy, Charley, for seeing what you kept in your lockers.'

"You know the Bishop of Denham?"

"I ought to do so. He used to read me lectures an hour long. I remember he once told my father that he ought to keep over me the severe rod of correction."

"Well, he was here the next morning early, and in all innocence I gave him the blotting-pad to use. You may, perhaps, fancy his looks, and his opinion of me, when those sinful sketches met his outraged eyes."

Charles thought his brother never would cease laughing. It was the best joke, he declared, that he had heard for many a day.

"But there are other things, Cyras," Charles resumed, "and they are not trifles. You have been forging my name to a bill."

All the mirth in the elder's face gave place to astonishment. "Forged your name to a bill!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say," returned Charles.

"I declare most solemnly that I have never done anything of the kind, Charley. You may put down as much folly to me as you will; but—*forgery!* You are dreaming, lad."

"You bought a lot of jewellery from a man named White," continued Charles, who, of course, was no longer at any loss to know who had so mysteriously personated him. "You paid him by a bill, purporting to be accepted by me. And you ——"

"But the bill's not due?" hastily interrupted Cyras, lifting his head in surprise.

"It was due a day or two ago, and ——"

"By Jove! I made no memorandum of the date. How time flies!"

"But why did you attach my name to it?"

"I signed it with my own name, 'C. Baumgarten.' I made it payable here, for I had no settled address in London, with all of you out of it, north, south, east and west. By Jove! that bill due! They didn't bring it to you, did they?"

"Of course they brought it to me, believing it was mine. And I disowned it, and it's not paid yet; and there's I don't know what work about it. It was a pretty close imitation of my handwriting, Cy."

"It was my own handwriting, and no imitation of anyone else's. I wrote my name as I always do, and always have done. As we are alike in person, Charles, so we are in writing. You know it."

"You have given me little opportunity of knowing it of late," was the reply. "It must be months since you wrote to me, Cyras."

"I've made your letters to me do duty for both of us," returned the free-and-easy Cyras; "and have sent you one of our splendid newspapers in return. I have no end of business letters to write now, besides looking after the shipping; so that when the day comes to an end I don't care to set to work again."

"You seem to have taken quite a business turn," remarked Charles, only half believing in his brother's industry.

"I took that a long time ago. It's a positive fact, Charley. They are going to give me a share in the concern."

"Who are?"

"Brice and Jansen. Anyway, they talk of it."

"And what about this bill, Cyras?"

"Oh, I'll see to it," said Cyras, airily. "Don't let it bother your head, lad."

It seemed that he did not allow it to bother his own. Seated back in Charley's easiest chair, his legs stretched out to the blaze—for the evening was chilly, and a fire had been kindled—Cyras lighted a small meerschaum, with which he had come provided, and held it between his complacent lips.

"One can't do long without one's smoke," he remarked. "Hope you don't mind it up here, Charley?"

"Not after business hours," laughed Charles. "Have you any more bills out, Cyras?"

"One more."

"And made payable here?"

Cyras nodded.

"And what is the amount?"

"Can't remember. A hundred pounds or so. It's a Bond Street tailor. I was obliged to have a regular rig-out. Colonial tailors don't do for London."

Charles Baumgarten recalled a rumour he had heard about a month before—that whispered enquiries were being made as to his finances.

"Cyras, do you want to ruin me?" he cried, in a startled tone. "I must take up these bills if you do not."

"Take up the bills!" echoed Cyras. "What for? You did not accept them."

"But the people think I did."

"Rubbish! Let them think what they like. I'll go with you to the parties, and show myself, and convict them of their error. Charley, lad, what a long face you are drawing! Just as you used to do when we were young boys and I led you into a scrape. Didn't I always get you out of it then? And I'll get you out of this. In fact, you are not in it."

"How will you get me out of it?"

"By paying the bills myself. I'll settle all up before leaving England."

"Why not pay at once?"

"Can't," lightly returned Cyras. "Money runs away over here; it simply melts in Paris. I brought about three hundred pounds with me, and it's all gone. I've telegraphed out to old Brice to send me more."

"Why did you not pay the jeweller at the time you bought his goods?"

"The bill came to so much more than I had thought for, and I hadn't enough in my pocket. Oh, it's all right, old fellow."

"And pray, Cyras, if I may put so bold a question, for whom were all those pretty things bought?"

"For one and another. Some for myself. Some for Gertrude. Some to send out to Wellington."

"For Gertrude?"

"To be sure. I'm keeping them all for her. Having left Wellington so hastily I was not able to lay in a stock of presents, so I got some over here. And I got some for Mrs. Carington."

"Who on earth is she?"

"Our purser's wife. She made the passage with him this time, to pay a visit to his folks in London. Good-hearted people, both of them, and made as much of me on board as if I had been a lord. The ship is chartered by Brice and Jansen, you know, Charley."

"Then you will go with me to these people about the bills, Cyras—the jeweller and the tailor?" resumed Charles, after a pause.

"I'll go now, if you like. I don't want to let you in for annoyance, brother mine."

"You have let me in for a good deal of that already, Cyras. Were you at the Haymarket two or three nights ago?"

"Yes."

"And there you were taken for me. Who was the lady? It was half over London the next day that I had been there in suspicious company."

"What a joke!" exclaimed Cyras, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and putting it up.

"You may look upon it as a good joke, Cyras, but it has half ruined me," said Charles with some bitterness.

"I knew I was being taken for you, Charley," laughed Cyras, carelessly. "Some fellows nodded to me, and one or two spoke, and I nodded back again and kept up the jest."

"A sorry jest for me, Cyras. I was engaged to be married—to Mary Dynevor."

"I'm uncommonly glad to hear it," cried Cyras, stretching out his hand to grasp his brother's. "Mary was the nicest of all the younger girls; as nice as Cyrilla."

"I said *was* engaged, Cyras. It is broken off now. Old Miss Dynevor saw me, as she thought, at the Haymarket with someone I had no business to be with; and she went home and told the Subdean. The next time I called in Eaton Place he turned me out of doors, and bade me think no more of his daughter."

Cyras suddenly became serious. "This has gone farther than I intended," he cried. "All my life I have been getting myself or others into scrapes, and I suppose I shall do so to the end of the chapter. And the best and the worst of it is that I generally manage to come out in worse colours than I deserve: as on this occasion."

Charles looked up. "Have they been traducing you as well as me?" he asked.

"The lady I treated to the theatre was no other than Mrs. Carington: as good a woman as ever lived, although, as Tony Lumpkin would say, her cheeks are as broad and red as a pulpit cushion. But it is all genuine colour, Charley, just as she herself is a genuine woman."

"What brought you there alone with her?" asked Charles.

"That I was with her alone was an accident," answered Cyras. "I treated them to the Haymarket, and took three of the best seats. At the last moment, just as we were about to start in the cab, Carington's old father came in to spend the evening, and he had to remain with him."

"I think you were imprudent, to say the least of it," laughed Charles. "The lady was wonderfully got up, I was told."

"Like all born colonists, she is fond of any amount of fans and feathers," returned Cyras. "It was her first introduction to a

London theatre, and a great occasion to her, and she put on all her war paint accordingly. But of other paint she had none, Charley: she is too honest and good for that."

"Where are the Caringtons staying?"

"With his brother. He's a widower, and lives at a pretty house, up Chelsea way. Decent, intelligent people, Charley; though, of course, not up to your mark."

"And where are you staying, Cyras?"

"I! You may well ask it, mon frère. Finding no home open to me on landing, the first individual I dropped upon, after leaving the ship at the docks, was Harry Brice. He is in Somerset House, you know; getting on, too; and was bound that morning on some expedition to the Customs. He told me you were on circuit; thought the mother and Gertrude were at Avon, and said I must come to them at Norwood. Down I went. But Norwood's out of the way for a fellow who wants to knock about town, and I came back to an hotel. Then I went to Paris with Tom Howard—you know Tom Howard, Charley?"

"Don't I! Spends all before him, and does no work."

Cyras laughed. "I met him accidentally one morning. He said he was off to Paris that evening, and I agreed to go with him. And here I am back again. And now you know all, Charley."

"Quite enough too," laughed Charley. "We'll go to White's now. And Cyras agreed with alacrity.

The jeweller's shop was lighted when they reached it. Mr. White and his assistant were both in it. Charles walked forward; Cyras held back a moment.

"I hear that bill is protested, Mr. White," began Charles.

"Yes, sir, or about to be," answered the jeweller. "And I must say I am surprised that a gentleman like yourself should allow things to come to such a pass. If it was not convenient to you to pay it now, you might have renewed it."

"I tell you again, as I told you before, that the bill is none of mine," said Charles. "I never bought the articles."

"I say that you did, sir, and that the bill is yours," returned White, showing temper for the first time. "To deny it is a paltry subterfuge which a gentleman in your position should be above——"

Charles interrupted. "You would swear to me before the Lord Mayor, I suppose?"

"Before all the Lord Mayors in the three kingdoms and the corporations, too," retorted White, now thoroughly roused. "If you——"

Cyras walked forward and stood beside his brother.

"Look at this gentleman," said Charles Baumgarten.

The jeweller gazed in amazement, now at one, now at the other. "What does it mean?" he cried at last. "Who are you, sir?" turning to Cyras.

"Well," cried Cyras, who looked upon the whole matter as an excellent joke; "don't you know me again?"

"You must be twins!" exclaimed the perplexed man.

"Not at all," said Cyras. "We are brothers, but not twins. I'm two years older than Mr. Charles Baumgarten."

"Sir," said the jeweller, turning to Charles, "allow me to ask why you did not explain to me that you had a brother who bore to you so remarkable a likeness? It might have solved the mystery."

"Because I never thought of him at all in the matter; I did not know he was in England. Of course, Mr. White, you now exonerate *me*."

"As if everyone did not!" exclaimed Cyras. "The trouble, Mr. White, has arisen from my careless habits. We colonists are proverbially careless, you know. Making no memorandum of the date, I did not know the bill was due. I have been spending most of the interval in Paris, where time flies, one forgets how quickly. It will be all right now, and your bill will get paid without your troubling to protest it."

They next called upon the holders of the bill, the Messrs. Jephson, who in their turn were equally surprised: the elder cynically remarking they might have had the wit to know that Cyras was at the bottom of the mischief. And then they went back to Pump Court, where Charles had ordered a substantial supper for Cyras's benefit.

"We don't go in much for eight o'clock dinners, over in New Zealand," remarked Cyras, "but we make up for it in supper."

Then Cyras grew confidential. He spoke of a certain fair daughter of Mr. Jansen, the second partner in the New Zealand house. She and Cyras were privately engaged; and he declared that if he could only win her he should throw carelessness to the winds and become as steady as Old Time.

"Her mother, a well-born Englishwoman, favours it," observed Cyras. "She thinks there must be any amount of latent good in a Dean's son. Mr. Jansen opposes it: not that he objects to me personally, but on the score of my want of prospects. He told me point-blank that he would give her to me were I able to become a partner in the firm."

"The difficulty is money, I suppose, Cyras?"

"Just so. Four thousand pounds. They would give me a small share in it for that sum."

"And you have not got it?"

"I have never saved anything."

"And what of the young lady herself?"

"I only wish it rested with her!" answered Cyras. "She would soon be mine. Ah, Charley, if I could only encompass that partnership, it would make a good man of me and steady me for life. If I have to part from her—well I don't think I should much care what went with me, or what the end was—perhaps ruin."

Charles was silent. He remembered how passionately he and Cyras had loved each other as boys, although Cyras did put upon him and tyrannize over him; and he asked himself whether he should give up his own marriage for a time, and save his brother. He had about two thousand pounds put by; part of it he had saved by degrees, part had come to him by a recent legacy. If he gave that to Cyras, his own marriage must be delayed, but he knew Mary would wait for him. It would be a grievous disappointment to both of them: but should disappointment be placed in comparison with his friendless brother's welfare—his welfare in this world, and, it might be, in that to come? The other two thousand would no doubt be managed amongst them—possibly by Lord Avon.

"You have not told me her name, Cyras."

"Anna. Anna Jansen. To me the prettiest name in the world. Ah, Charley, if you only knew her!"

Charles fell into deep thought. When supper was over, Cyras brought out his meerschaum again. It was nearly one o'clock when he took his departure. Charles went down the stairs with him.

"You have not told me where you are staying, Cyras."

"Here, there and everywhere. Just now I am at the Tavistock. Good-night, Charley boy: à demain."

Charles released his hand, and stood a moment to watch him away. Cyras broke into a song as he crossed the flags, regaling the slumbers of Pump Court with the sentiments of the renowned Mr. Paul Clifford:

"Oh, there never was life like the robber's,
So jolly, so bold, so free!
And its end? Why, a cheer from the crowd below,
And a leap from a leafless tree."

(To be continued.)

A MARRIAGE FROM THE STAGE.

"NOW that we are comfortably seated round the fire, our poet and critic, Mr. Smith, will give us his edition of Mrs. Raughan's story. You are wanting to hear it I am sure, if anything may be judged from the attention you give to her portrait over the piano," said our hostess.

I had indeed been looking with unusual interest at the picture to which Mrs. Fitzgerald referred. It represented a dark woman in Greek dress, whose black waving hair fell low over her brow, contrasting strangely with the pallor of her face. Bending slightly forward, she was clasping her hands upon her knees in the attitude of a listener. Owing to their expression, her eyes struck me more than any other feature in the beautiful face before me. They were neither very large nor very bright, but I have rarely seen command and beseeching united in one glance as I saw them there. The picture seemed to be the embodiment of some idea, some legend or story I had read. The face was too spirituelle for a Sappho, and too pensive for a Muse of Tragedy, but as I turned away at the bidding of our hostess my thoughts flew back to that old tale of "La Belle Dame sans Merci."

I took my seat in the circle round the fire, where I could glance now and then at the fair Italian, and observe how she took this blazoning abroad of her unhappy secrets. "She will have justice from me," I thought as I turned my eyes upon the so-called poet, who, with a confident smile, was drawing a small MS. from his pocket.

"Much of what I relate," began Smith, "was gathered from the gossip of the old housekeeper who was in the service of the Raughans. A small pocket-book, carefully preserved among the family archives, and which contains some letters and notes belonging to Gabriel di Vilna, has furnished me with important facts; but I had to do more than merely gather these facts together. As I had promised to put the whole into shape as a complete story, I found it necessary to imagine much that might and indeed must have passed through the minds of the principal actors in this tragedy."

Here Smith unfolded his MS. and solemnly began, and I glanced up at Mrs. Raughan, who seemed to look reproachfully down on us as she listened to her own history.

The Honourable Mrs. Arthur Raughan, born Claudia Lorelli, was well known in Florence before her marriage as a successful opera singer. I need scarcely describe to you her remarkable beauty; her picture is before you, and words of mine would not add to its effect. Unlike most actresses, Claudia was not easy to know. Proud and reserved towards strangers, she dreaded that impertinent interference

and that insulting bonhommie with which prosperous mediocrity is ever ready to tease the genius forced to gain its daily bread in full view of the public. When one night at the Theatre Royal a certain Gabriel di Vilna was planning afresh a visionary introduction to the object of his worship, he little dreamed that the handsome, light-haired Englishman whose head protruded from the next box was Claudia's accepted lover, and that the oath he was swearing again and again in his native Italian would soon be converted into an unconscious perjury.

So when the long-coveted introduction was to have taken place, and the goddess brought down from her pedestal, di Vilna learned to his bitter disappointment that only the day before the beautiful prima donna had broken her engagement with the manager of the Theatre Royal, and was on her way to England as Mrs. Arthur Raughan.

The two runaways came to The Limes direct from Italy, as the leaves were falling from the trees and the chilly autumn winds moaning round the house.

"I have chosen between you and a great career, Arthur," whispered Claudia, as Raughan helped his wife out of the carriage and led her into her new home.

"You shall never repent your choice," returned Arthur, smiling.

"No?" replied Claudia, looking at him and taking no notice of the new surroundings that were to become a part of her life.

"Before long you will look back upon your stage life as impossible; you will even wonder how you could have endured it," said he, looking with satisfaction round his ancestral hall.

Claudia's face shadowed slightly. "I shall always look back upon the past with respect. The expression of noble or deep emotions in music is as grand, and I sometimes think grander, than anything else in life," she said, with a half sigh.

Arthur Raughan hated arguments. "You must admire these decorations, my darling," he said. "Here are more than twenty brushes on this wall, and there is my grandfather's old sword, hung up over the portrait of the Duke of Wellington."

Claudia pressed his hand, but in spite of her newly-found love a chill crept over her.

"I will admire everything, even the weather," she said, smiling as well as she could, "only I must rest first. Remember what a long journey we have made."

As might have been expected: as Raughan's distant relatives, as his visiting acquaintances, as all his friends expected: the young man would soon find out the fatal mistake he had committed, the unwise step he had taken. An opera singer does not easily fall into the ways of the orthodox country squire's wife; she does not take naturally to distributing alms among villagers, nor does she always find herself at home on horseback full pelt after the hounds.

A life which had called all her physical activities into play,

suddenly exchanged for one of comparative inertia, would have told hardly upon her vigorous mental and emotional nature; even if she had found in her husband's companionship all that subtle sympathy which a spontaneous and ardent affection such as hers demanded as an adequate return. Even had she found this capacity for sympathy in Raughan, a sympathy of which the fox-hunting young squire was incapable, her life at the Limes would have been a sacrifice at the altar of Love.

But neither Raughan nor his friends were likely to understand this. The opera singer was to them a beautiful wild flower transplanted from a garden of thistles into a greenhouse. That a woman in Mrs. Raughan's position could ever feel a yearning regret for a lost career, a career given up in a moment of enthusiastic devotion to the man she loved, was not likely to cross the minds of these good people.

Indeed, Raughan, even in his most reflective moments, never dreamed that such a sacrifice had been made. The passion this beautiful woman felt for him was significant only as a necessary concomitant of his own happiness. No; not only was such an insight into their true mutual relations never permitted to this easy-going, shallow man, but he was inclined, after the first flush of passion was over, to think that he had behaved rather magnificently, and that, as a just reward for his generous conduct, he was possessed of a divine right to criticise his wife in her new position with the severity of Censor, and, if occasion required it, to show a little justifiable temper.

Once removed from the novel surroundings in which Arthur Raughan found himself at Florence: away from the footlights, music, stage atmosphere and the triumph of successful rivalship: the woman whom he had adored in his very limited way as a heroine of the drama, a being who, for a short time at least, had awakened the dormant capacity within him for admiration of poetry and music, here in the country seemed different. Among his congenial associations of the hunting field, she seemed gradually to lose the very principle which had quickened all his new life within him.

They had not been married three weeks when Arthur lounged into his wife's room one morning, saying, in his Southern drawl:

"I've just got an Italian valet, Claudia. He is a regular native, as dark as night, and will look well against our dining-room panels. He came with a letter from Rabone's in Florence, calls himself Gabriel, and his manners are perfect."

The new valet had not lived many days at the Limes before he had made an unusual impression upon the household. The haughty reserve with which he treated his fellow-servants engendered a secret suspicion among them, particularly fostered by the old butler, that Gabriel was a spy in the employ of some unknown, but no doubt notorious, gang of burglars, who had criminal intentions towards the

family treasures; or, at least, an agent of some secret society which had murderous designs on the Tory master of the house. Mr. Raughan was quite sure the man would prove an invaluable servant.

Mrs. Raughan shared neither her husband's nor her servants' sentiments. She was conscious only that this inscrutable being, with his lowered eyes and his ready anticipation of her every wish: for it was he who chiefly waited on her: was watching her as narrowly as if his life depended on the discovery of her inmost thoughts. She was sure that no word or look passing between her husband and herself in his presence was unnoticed, that nothing she did or said was ever forgotten by him. When she sang, she was perfectly certain that he would be listening outside the door; she could often hear the sound of his retreating footsteps as she left the piano. Her favourite songs she always found arranged upon the piano ready for her, and she knew that this must be the new valet's doing.

"I don't like him," Claudia once remarked to her husband. "Do you particularly wish to keep him?"

"I dislike changing servants if I can help it," replied Raughan carelessly.

He was already fairly on the way to recovery from the temporary stage fever caught in Florence; that fever together with the American fever being the epidemics to which youthful members of the British aristocracy are supposed to be most susceptible.

Claudia shrugged her shoulders and leaned back in her chair; she knew Arthur was not in the mood to listen patiently to any complaint of hers.

"The man does extremely well, Claudia. It would not be right to send him away without reason." Mrs. Raughan tapped her foot on the fender and held her hands towards the fire without replying.

"What a pity it is you don't ride, Claudia," Arthur began again after a moment's silence. "Hunting is the only thing to do in winter, and there is a quiet horse you can try. We can have some fellow from Rosebridge to give you lessons, and Mrs. Brunswold will give you hints; she has the best seat of any woman in the county."

"You know I have never ridden," said Claudia, turning her eyes slowly upon him as she waved the screen that had been lying on her lap. "I am not yet used to English country life. You seem to forget sometimes what manner of life mine has been, and that violent exercise is particularly disagreeable to me."

"Very well," replied her husband, again carelessly, and the subject was dropped.

Mrs. Raughan was beginning to see that Arthur could not realise sympathetically the difference in their temperaments. She had, however, another and a very definite trial before her.

Visitors began to come; people with whom the artist had about as much in common as a nightingale would have with a thoroughbred fox-terrier. The undisguised wonder with which they all regarded

her; the way in which they exhibited their good-natured curiosity, was trying to a sensitive and high-spirited woman. The men discoursed on the weather and the local interests very much as a modern soldier might discuss the present system of war administration with a lately revivified human fossil from the ruins of Troy.

Claudia was pleasant and affable to all, but her heart was sore after Italy; she longed for the renewal of her hard but congenial life of Bohemian and singer. Her nature was strong and impulsive; she found it almost impossible to adapt herself quiescently to her surroundings, and she met with no help from those about her.

Mrs. Raughan was sitting in the room in which we are now, one afternoon in spring, when Gabriel announced Mrs. Brunswold, with that peculiar intonation which meant: "Here is the woman you dislike; I know it, and would send her away if I could."

Mrs. Brunswold was always calling, and Claudia rose with very little energy and said to the retreating valet: "Tell your master that Mrs. Brunswold is here," and there was a shadow of sarcasm in her voice.

Arthur came in, and the talk turned upon the gossip round about; the new master of the hounds, his pedigree, and whether the horse he rode at the last meet was his own or a hired hack, and such-like details of thrilling interest.

Perhaps of all her new acquaintances Claudia disliked Mrs. Brunswold the most, partly because Arthur was perpetually holding the woman up as a model of all that was admirable and pleasing. It was painful to one who was fully aware of her incapacity in this particular walk of life. And again, partly that the woman seemed to regard her—Claudia—as a mistake, as a Moloch to whom Arthur Raughan had, in a moment of folly, sacrificed his happiness.

However, Mrs. Raughan made an effort to join in the conversation; but, finding it too deep for her, she sat silently toying with her handkerchief, unconscious that she was stripping the lace off the border. Mrs. Brunswold's loud voice paused for an instant, and catching sight of Claudia's guitar, she called out in her Southern brogue:

"I've got to go in a moment, Mrs. Raughan, but do give us something with your guitar first. I am dying to hear it."

Claudia knew perfectly well that the good dame didn't know one note from another; but to please her husband's guest she smiled graciously and took the guitar from Arthur's hands.

"I don't suppose you will like the music I sing," she couldn't help saying, as she turned towards Mrs. Brunswold.

"Nonsense, Claudia; Mrs. Brunswold can appreciate anything. Sing something neither too sad nor too sentimental."

"I must sing what I know," laughed Claudia; and she began "Une Nuit d'Eté."

"Thanks, very much," said Mrs. Brunswold, who didn't understand a word of any language but the Southern dialect of England.

"'Une Nuit d'Eté' is a favourite song of mine," was the reply, as Mrs. Raughan rose with her visitor.

"And very charming it is! Now you really mustn't come down the drive without your hat, Mr. Raughan," the lively widow said in her loud voice as she sailed into the hall. "You'll catch a dreadful cold in that top story of yours, and your wife will have her revenge on me."

The moment Claudia lost sight of the retreating figures she returned hastily into the drawing-room, walked out upon the terrace and round by the back of the drive, where she could see them coming without being observed.

They were walking along together, laughing and talking. Arthur was flicking the air with his whip, his eyes fixed on Mrs. Brunswold's face with that characteristic look he always wore when interested and pleased; a look half inquiring, half smiling.

Almost without knowing why, Claudia bent forward to hear what they were saying.

"Wouldn't it be rather a pity to leave the Park just now?" Arthur asked his companion, just as they were within a few yards of his listening wife. The widow laughed and said something Claudia could not catch, and then her husband laughed his light merry laugh as they passed her.

There was a cold wind blowing, although the spring was far advanced. Now that the two had disappeared, Claudia became conscious that she was without a wrap, and she also began to ask herself why she had stolen out upon them, what she had expected to hear or see, and she felt angry with herself for having even for a moment assumed any possibility of rivalship with *that* woman. In spite of this argument, it displeased her to see Arthur so evidently interested in all Mrs. Brunswold's manœuvres and so easily amused by her commonplace, loudly-delivered jokes.

But before she had formed these thoughts clearly in her mind she was aware of the approach of someone. It must be Arthur coming back some other way; how foolish she would look out in the chilly wind without hat or cloak and for no purpose whatever. But it was not Arthur; it was the confidential valet who was close upon her, holding a shawl in his hand. Claudia turned, and their eyes met for a moment.

"Pardon, Signora, but the afternoon is cold and you are exposed."

"Thank you," replied Claudia, taking the shawl from him before he had time to put it round her shoulders, and walking back to the house with a haughty, repellant air. She was vexed that the watchful man should have come upon her then; doubtless he was aware of what brought her there. She would have been still more angry had she seen the valet, a few moments before, hastily picking up from

the drawing-room floor the ill-used pocket-handkerchief, kiss it, and put it carefully in one of his pockets, before catching up a shawl and following his mistress.

That evening Raughan remarked: "We—you—must be dull here, Claudia; a little excitement would do you good. I think of taking you up to town for a month or so, and looking up my old friends there. What do you say?"

Claudia felt as if a weight were lifted off her heart. Here was her husband proposing to take her away from that woman! After all, he could not be so fond of her society!

"Mrs. Brunswold is going at the end of the month," Arthur added, with his usual want of taste. Detestable woman! Mrs. Raughan remembered the scrap of conversation she had overheard. Arthur might surely have done without the widow's society for a short time; he had met her a hundred times already in the hunting field.

"Well?" asked Raughan, raising his eyebrows. "What do you say, Claudia?"

"I am not used to English society," murmured she. "I should even prefer remaining here." And a tear stood on her lashes.

"Even here!" echoed Raughan. "It seems to me that your reply to all questions is the same: 'I am not used to this or that!' I wish you would get used to something." And he got up and made towards the door, frowning petulantly.

The pent-up anguish of Claudia's soul burst out at last. For more than three months she had been almost neglected by him; and after all he had promised, after all she had sacrificed!

"You are tired of me, Arthur," she exclaimed impetuously, rushing to the root of the matter with the determination of real despair. "I cannot bear this systematic coldness."

She placed her hand upon the door and held the other towards him. If this appeal had been made in Florence, in those bright and happy days when love was to last for ever and truth was as clear as glass, he would have wept for joy; now it seemed ridiculous and tiresome.

"Have you no pity for me, Arthur? Am I nothing to you?" she still entreated, as he kept silence, staring at her in surprise. "I have no one in the world but you!" And she attempted to take his hand. All her pride was gone; the gulf between them must be carried at any hazard, even if it meant humiliation and disappointment.

"Let me pass, please," retorted Arthur at last, coolly. "Your behaviour is theatrical."

"No," she exclaimed passionately, catching his hands in spite of this stinging sarcasm. "You kill me with this neglect." And she bent so low that her head rested on his arm.

"Neglect? Nonsense, Claudia! Your foolishness is extravagant. Do you expect a man to spend his life in love-making? I thought we had quietly settled down to make the best of our mutual position."

"You are heartless," she cried, raising her head and pushing him from her. "If you hate me, tell me so and I will go. I will not bear this state of things; I cannot."

Was it by some strange fatality that at this instant the door opened and Gabriel entered? His face was unusually pale, and his sombre eyes flashed as he turned them upon Arthur. Mrs. Raughan swept away from them and went to her favourite seat. Raughan stared for a moment and then passed out.

In agonising silence Claudia sat, half stunned, waiting till the man should arrange the table near her chair, finish his menial duties, and then leave her alone to weep. Gabriel took the books off her table and came back with coffee, his face working painfully with what he was forced to suppress.

"Put it down," she whispered, as he stood before her with the tray in his trembling hands. The tray was at her side in a moment, and, as she raised her eyes to bid him go, she saw the freed hands give a passionate gesture, and heard the man groan as he left the room. "That man cannot be a servant, an inferior!" she thought. "What brings him here?"

An hour or two later, Arthur, who had not forgotten the recent unpleasant scene, came down to the drawing-room, and, finding the windows open, walked out upon the terrace. The mist was thick and the air cold for a spring night.

"Are you mad, Claudia?" he exclaimed, flicking the end of his cigar into the pond below the terrace. Mrs. Raughan was leaning on the low wall as if to watch the moonbeams that crept over the mist and fell brightly on to the water below.

"Why are you stopping out here on a damp night, making a tragedy about nothing?" he continued. "You are really too preposterously unreasonable. I shall soon lose my temper with you."

Mrs. Raughan moved, turned her dark eyes slowly upon him and seemed about to make an appeal. Arthur, who hated anything in the shape of a scene, retreated a step and lowered his eyes. This was more than his wife could bear.

"You talk to me of losing your temper," she cried, grasping his arm and speaking with intense scorn. "You, who haven't as much passion in your whole body as I have in my little finger!" Arthur attempted feebly to release his arm, utterly taken aback by the turn things were taking.

"You shall not go," she replied to his silent remonstrance. "You shall not go till you have answered me some questions."

Raughan had recovered himself now, and was determined to keep his temper, if possible, and to treat her folly with good-natured contempt.

"I suppose I must listen to a long tirade; so begin at once, please. Only, be as brief as you can, and don't rouse the whole house with your voice."

They paced up and down the terrace arm-in-arm, for she would not release her hold of him.

"Where were we five months ago?" she began breathlessly.

"In Italy, if my memory serves me. What a nuisance I haven't got another cigar!" and he felt in his pocket. Claudia went on:

"This night five months ago I had just come from the theatre; do you remember that?"

Raughan had found a cigar and was raising it to his lips when she dashed it out of his hand and repeated her question.

"My dear girl, do you suppose I make a note of everything that happens?" returned Raughan quietly. "Come; I mean to go in, and you shall come too."

"There is something I wish you to remember," continued Mrs. Raughan, taking no notice of his last words. "Five months ago I had come home from the theatre and had met you. I recall every word you said. You vowed that if I gave up the stage, which was my very world, that I should never repent it; that you would never give me cause for a moment's unhappiness! I remember how your tears fell on my hands. How are you keeping your promise, Arthur? Shall I go back and begin my old life again?"

"You are talking foolishly. I have given you no just cause for this outburst of passion. I think you are making up a grievance, and should scarcely expect me to be a sympathetic listener."

"Heaven knows," she exclaimed, "that I never dreamed you would be a sympathetic listener, but I thought at least that you would have a little feeling for me."

"You must not expect me to be perpetually talking of love, my dear Claudia," remarked her husband. "As to your going away, that's out of the question. We are married; you have nothing to complain of really, and so let us hear no more about the matter."

A look, half contemptuous, half despairing, flashed over Claudia's face as she dropped her husband's arm and followed him into the house; the sea might as well break upon the pebbles and hope to soften them, as she to move Arthur by her words.

Below the terrace stood Gabriel. His hands were clasped and pressed against the stones, his dark hair lay tangled and wet over his brow, and he was muttering under his breath.

Smith paused here and looked up from his papers. "There is a note in di Vilna's book which I should prefer to read to you as it is. It is dated April 20, midnight. 'I really forgot myself to-day, and she must have noticed it. The breach is getting wider and wider. My time is coming."

As I glanced now and again at Mrs. Raughan's face, it seemed to me to express a variety of emotions. I could almost cheat myself into believing that she followed every word of Smith's tale and was consciously testifying to its truth.

Smith again took up his MS. and continued:

The next day was as sultry as if it had been July. Guests would be coming in the afternoon, and Mrs. Raughan must assume a bright and affable appearance; and though the recollection of last night lay like a weight upon her soul, she must keep far down in their source the tears that were only too ready to rise and proclaim to the unsympathetic world her secret sorrow. In spite of the sudden and oppressive heat, the afternoon went off very well. The beautiful hostess sang several times, and in her most charming manner. Many of those who had been most pressing were bored to death after the first song was half through, and were glad to escape and wander about the garden in spite of the black clouds that had been coming up out of the West and making a formidable background to the house. After much chatting and tea-drinking, Mrs. Brunswold, who had avoided the singing altogether, came up on the front lawn, where Claudia was sitting.

"You must sing that charming song you sang the other day," she shouted, flourishing her sunshade perilously near Raughan's eyes, as he followed behind her. Claudia protested that everybody had had enough singing in the drawing-room.

"Oh, not at all; the guitar can come out here with the help of Mr. Raughan, and it will sound charming in the open air." Arthur was already running to obey this divinity, and Mrs. Raughan's expostulations were drowned in the hum of voices. The guitar arrived. Claudia looked, smiling, round, and began in sotto-voce as the song required.

Mrs. Brunswold, who was a little behind the rest, had found a convivial man at her elbow, and a little stage-whispered chaff went on between the two, occasionally varied by spasmodic flutterings from her sunshade to induce silence; and this during the whole of the song which was so charming and which she was dying to hear again.

And so the agreeable afternoon wore on and the guests departed. A little later Claudia was sitting in her room looking over a letter she had written to the manager of the Opera House at Venice, when a knock came to the door, and her maid entered with a message from her master—that he was seeing Mrs. Brunswold home as her carriage had not come, and would Claudia excuse him if he were not back to dinner. Mrs. Raughan bent her head coldly as she sealed up the letter and gave it to the girl.

How interminably long that meal seemed with that silent, watchful man behind her chair. She felt his eyes upon her, and at moments almost doubted whether he could not read her very thoughts. The dead silence became at last so insupportable that she ventured a question. Had Mr. Raughan ordered the carriage? No, he had not ordered the carriage. Was the storm likely to come on? Yes, the

storm would doubtless come on shortly. "In that case," said Mrs. Raughan, "the closed carriage must be sent after him directly."

"Tell Maria to bring my hat, please," she added, rising from the table.

The man expostulated humbly but firmly—the storm would break almost immediately. The Signora, however, had determined to risk it. She meant to walk out, it was so oppressive in the house; and he saw her disappear in the direction of the ruined Abbey, a favourite spot. The clouds that had formed themselves into that formidable rampart behind the house were spreading overhead, and heavy drops came down through the sultry air. Then came a loud clap of thunder, followed immediately by a blinding flash of lightning. Mrs. Raughan must have just reached the ruins, and might be frightened at the strength of the storm. Gabriel caught up a cloak and ran as if for dear life down the front lawn and through the trees to the edge of the grounds, and then on through more trees to the Abbey glade. His black hair was flying as he ran, and in his face was a look of resolve taken in great agitation.

The rain had not yet pressed through the trees, but flash after flash lit up with startling brilliancy the growing twilight. The glade was reached, and within a stone's throw stood the ruins. There was Mrs. Raughan, motionless under the shelter of the broad gateway, her face pressed against the stones and tears falling down the pale cheeks. In a moment the valet was at her feet, breathless, groaning aloud and pressing her dress to his lips.

His mistress drew herself back as if to avoid some dangerous animal. "Release my dress," she commanded with haughty anger, as he clung to it in spite of her.

"Forgive me," murmured Gabriel, his head still bowed.

"Get up and go," she cried. "Are you mad, fellow?"

Instead of answering, his head drooped lower and lower until it almost touched her feet.

"Leave me this moment," she said, fumbling at the little dagger that hung in its jewelled sheath at her waist, "or I shall have to spurn you with my feet."

Gabriel leapt up. "I know," he cried, with fierce tenderness, "that you have the fearless courage of a noble soul, that you have the beauty of a goddess, that you have determination enough to retrieve the one unwise step you took; that even now you are planning for your future release!"

Mrs. Raughan started; an angry flush rose to her brow. "Insolent!" she muttered. "Let me pass, if you refuse to go yourself."

"Mrs. Raughan! Claudia! I have lived here a menial for five months! I have suffered martyrdom. I have been at the beck and call of *that* man, who is my inferior and whom I hate. I have degraded myself for ever in the sight of my equals, and, still worse, I have endured from you the scorn you would not have dared to show me had

you known who I am. I loved you in Florence, I moved heaven and earth to gain admission to you, but it was too late. I followed you to England, for your protection, knowing well what your future would be here. I believe myself, of all men, most capable of understanding you and holding you at your own noble worth. I wish only to be your servant. Forgive me," he went on, trembling, as his words seemed to fall on unheeding ears. "Forgive me if I have been premature in speaking to you. I might have endured longer."

She was surprised and bewildered. The sudden and unexpected revelation of this man's mystery, and the full realisation of her present position, deprived her for a moment of self command and reflection; even the look of contempt had faded from the face, leaving only traces of patient suffering. Di Vilna, indeed, wondered at her passive silence. "Claudia," he whispered, attempting to take her hand, "may I help you? Let me devote my life to you; let me lead you back to ambition and happiness."

This last word shook Mrs. Raughan out of her momentary forgetfulness. Withdrawing her hand coldly she looked him full in the face. "If your feelings are those of a true man you will leave me at once. At least give me the sad consolation of bearing my burden alone. I want—I need no help."

The Italian's face darkened. "You speak hastily; you think of me still as one beneath you; you cannot shake off the association of five months. Believe me!"

"Enough!" cried Claudia bitterly. "You may be of noble birth, but I feel it a degradation even to speak to you. Begone; and let me never look upon your face again."

"And shall I have no recompense for all I have endured? Will you not let me stay to watch over you? Have some pity on me, Claudia."

"You shall have some recompense! My husband will give you your wages, they are more than enough recompense for the services of a spy and an intruder."

Mrs. Raughan smiled pitilessly and turned to go, though the lightning was flashing in their eyes and the rain still poured in torrents. Gabriel caught both her hands convulsively and she was attempting to wrest them from his grasp, when they caught sight of Arthur's figure lounging up the grassy knoll.

It was too late. His face as he came upon them became white, and his hand clenched the riding-whip he had dangled so carelessly a moment before. In an instant he had stepped up to di Vilna and held him by the collar.

"Have you a word to say for this fellow?" he cried hoarsely.

"No," she answered scornfully.

The look Gabriel turned and cast on her was never forgotten by Raughan. Claudia heard behind her, as she hurried away, the sound of a short struggle, and then rapid strokes of a whip; and

she knew that the tall Italian was a mere puppet in the hands of the young English athlete.

The storm cleared off as suddenly as it had come on, and by midnight nothing was left of it in the calm air but the slow dripping of the trees. A bright light was still coming from the windows of the house, and to the solitary man outside it seemed as if this one glowing spot contained all that was worth loving or hating in this world.

Smarting from Raughan's whip, his hopes dashed to the ground and rejected by the one human being for whom life had seemed desirable, Gabriel prowled round the house from which he had been cast out for ever. He walked noiselessly over the terrace and crept round to the drawing-room windows. They were open, and he could see Claudia sitting at the further end writing. Arthur might be coming down in a few minutes. Her face was pale, but it wore a restful look that he had not seen there for a long time. Doubtless they were reconciled, and she would be happy for a short time again. Well—and the sense of his utter loneliness flashed upon him as he looked in.

Turning again he glanced back at the dark sky, the wet lawn; he heard the night wind sigh and rustle in the trees, which flung down heavy drops to the ground. Inside all was light, and there was the one human being worth living for or dying with. He stept in.

Claudia looked up, startled, seeing who it was, in spite of his draggled clothes and disordered hair. She rose and walked towards the bell.

With whirling head Gabriel staggered forward and intercepted her. No word was spoken between them. Claudia did not scream when he snatched the dagger from her waist with his trembling hands; she only caught his wrist and turned her flashing eyes full upon him. For a few moments they stood staring, both reading in each other's eyes a fixed determination. Then suddenly Gabriel drew back his hand from her grasp.

Arthur Raughan was smoking upstairs, thinking idly over all that had happened. He felt happy and contented with his own behaviour, and with Claudia. He would go down directly and be very pleasant to her; after all, she was loving, and really did her best to make what she could of the situation. As he lounged into the drawing-room, his smile froze into a look of horror.

"The housekeeper remembers well that terrible night," Smith said, putting down his MS. "How Raughan nearly went mad, and how the servants ran about wringing their hands in the helpless way natural to them. The Limes was put into the hands of Mrs. Fitzgerald's father, and Arthur lived abroad till his death. The house

had for some years after this the reputation of being haunted. The servants insisted that on calm nights the figure of Mrs. Raughan might be seen pacing up and down the terrace, followed by the tall slinking form of the Italian valet, as they had always persisted in calling him. On windy nights they heard sounds of a guitar and singing from no earthly voice."

Smith had finished his tale, and we all thanked him. Conversation went on, but I could not talk, nor indeed think of anything but the tragedy I had just heard, and the portrait of Claudia Raughan seemed to haunt me like a physical pressure; I could not keep my eyes off it.

When I was alone in my room, I sat down before the fire to think over the whole story, but recollecting that if I still continued in the same train of thought I should not sleep the whole night, I strove to drive it from my remembrance. It was useless; my thoughts wandered back, and the portrait was still before my eyes.

At last my desire to see the face again grew so strong that I got up and crept downstairs in the dark. I found my way with some difficulty, knocking against several corners as I groped along. Once the drawing-room door was reached my heart almost misgave me, but it struck me that I could get a candle from one of the tables and at least light myself upstairs again. Opening the door softly I went in.

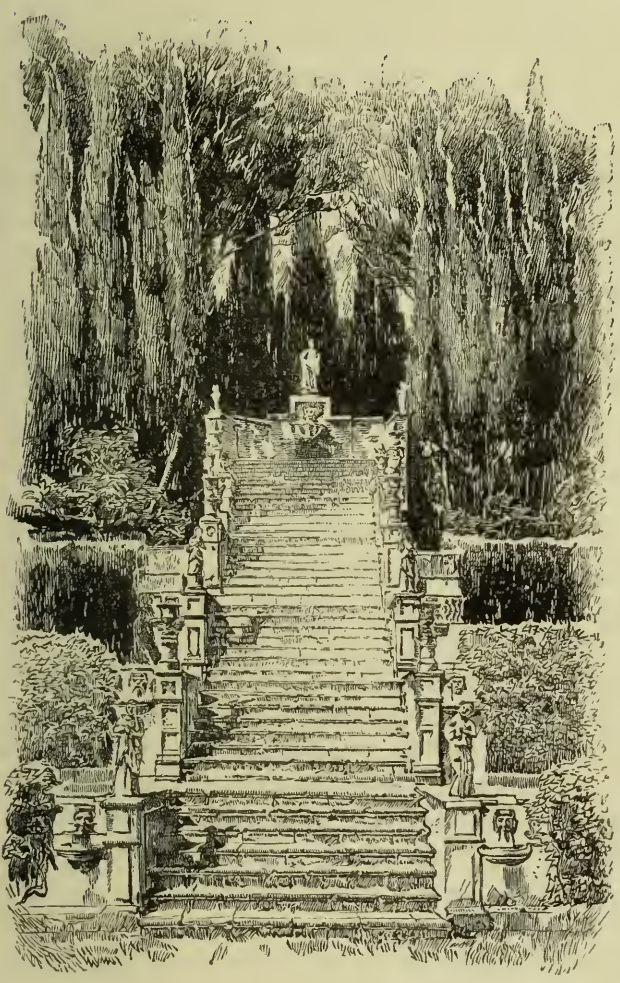
All was still, and the fire in the little room was sufficient to show me perfectly the objects in it. I made my way to the piano and stood looking at the portrait. In the flickering light it seemed to me as if her lips moved, and her eyes were fixed on mine with a searching melancholy. As I stood there a sudden thought flashed through my mind, and almost smiling at my folly, I opened the piano and sat down before it. Glancing once more at the face above me, I began to play, very softly, the opening notes of her favourite song, "Une Nuit d'Eté." A shiver crept through me, and my hair crisped as I distinctly heard, close at my ear, a passionate and yet far-off voice responding to my invitation.

I do not know whether I went through the whole of the accompaniment, for I remembered nothing more till I found myself lying on the ground, the fire out, and the dawn peering through above the shutters.

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Under Northern Skies," etc., etc.

Soller, Nov., 1886.



MY DEAR E.—We were to ascend the Puig Major. A. carries everything before him like an autocrat. He has only to suggest things and they are done. Indeed, Rosita divines his wishes before they are spoken. I cannot in the least make all this out. I have to speak very distinctly before my wishes are understood and regarded.

This going up the Puig Major was a great undertaking for me. Although by far the lightest weight of the party, Nature never intended me for a mountain climber. The Puig Major is hardly a mountain, you might reply; but the way to the summit is most certainly a "peine forte et dure." However, let us begin at the beginning.

H. C. was in great form. The idea of ascending the Puig Major was especially agreeable to him. He is endowed with all those muscular powers which add so much to the pleasures of life. Like Longfellow on another occasion, he thought he should remain all night on the summit, to become thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the solitude and silence of the situation, and make it the subject of his next grand epic poem.

A. undertook to organise the excursion. There was not very much to be done, but that little was important. We should require a mule and a boy, paniers well laden with luncheon, wine to make up for the wear and tear to the constitution caused by so much undue exertion. We were in good hands. A. is one who will never allow the citadel to starve so long as there is corn in Egypt.

The next morning we were up early. I cannot quite say that we rose with the sun, for we did not see the sun. He was not visible throughout the day, and I am not sure that he rose at all. A hasty glance at the Puig Major showed it capped and clouded. It was a grey morning; almost the first in our experience of Mallorca; but in England we should have called it very fair weather.

A. therefore laughed to scorn any suggestion of deferring the expedition. In our case it would have meant giving it up altogether, for we had put off our departure by only one day. It was the utmost we could do without interfering very much with our future plans. So the hampers were packed with a goodly store, and the mule at the door looked at them with a patient protest.

In truth he was not lightly laden. The paniers themselves are formidable. In addition to the commissariat supplies, our camera and tripod and all the etceteras were stowed away in their capacious dimensions. For we intended to take photographs from the summit, not only of the world below but of that above. We should be so much nearer the sun, it was just possible that if he condescended to shine upon us we might make solar discoveries and revolutionise our present system. Then great coats and ulsters were added to the burden of the mule, which felt that it was very nearly approaching the last straw.

Over all was thrown the thick rug, white and woolly, which is ordinarily used in Mallorca on such occasions. On this and between the paniers anyone might mount during the transit from earth to the top of the Puig Major. The mule probably would object to the extra burden, but like most oppressed races, it would have to submit.

There was a great deal of small excitement, both inside and outside the fonda. A party of five Englishmen starting from Soller to make the ascent of the mountain (I like to put it as importantly as possible) was unprecedented. The fifth Englishman consisted of A's servant, James, the most useful member of the small community. Rosita was in her element: so active that she seemed ubiquitous; so anxious for one's welfare, that she appeared a veritable ministering spirit. Whether her affections were directed towards A. or lavished upon H. C. I could not be quite certain, but I had my opinion. I was quite sure that as soon as we were gone, she would rush off to church and pray to her favourite saint for our safe return. She would have done better to pray for a fine day.

Even Mariquita came a little out of her shell, and stood with her knitting in the doorway, looking on at the lading of the mule, smiling

out of her pretty shy eyes with an effect which I thought would endanger Rosita's reign—as far as H. C. was concerned.

At length everything was ready and we started. Of course there was a crowd outside to see us depart. The arrival of the diligence was a small matter compared with this. The mule boy followed up behind us, leading his long-suffering animal. He was a boy with ideas, and very often wanted to go one way whilst we went another. We knew better, however, than to trust him out of our sight; we should never have seen mule or boy or provisions again. Imagine our exhausted state at the top of the Puig Major with nothing wherewith to restore animation! We should never have lived to come down again. H. C.'s night of silence and solitude would have known no to-morrow.

Mariquita and Rosita watched us from their doorway all down the narrow street, anxiety in their faces, a love-light in their eyes. This, H. C. said, was meant for the mule: it was compassion, not love; they are all fond of animals, these Mallorquinas, and are very good to the dumb creatures. I don't think they ever even drown their kittens, for the place is overrun with cats. You never saw such miserable specimens. They are half the size of our English cats, and if there were convicts in the cat world, I should say these Mallorca cats from first to last were all at large on a ticket of leave. Small as they are, they have immense voices, and the caterwauling that goes on at night has constantly disturbed my rest and very much affected my nervous system. H. C. has many a time got up and thrown a boot at them, but the missile seems to escape them or go through them, just as if they were ghosts or had a charmed life: and all they do in return is to sit up on their hind legs and make faces at him—or so it looks to one's sleepy and distorted imagination. He even went to the chemist's one day and bought the largest squirt in the shop, but he might have spared himself the trouble: a fire-engine would not move them.

Our progress down the narrow streets of Soller was attended with much excitement. People flocked to their doors and gazed after us as if we had been a group of angels from Paradise. The mule attracted great attention, and the mule boy, thinking it a pity the seat should be wasted, had himself mounted the animal.

Outside the town we came upon one of the old crosses for which Mallorca may be said to be famous. It was a sort of religious day in Soller, and surrounding the cross, occupied in short devotions, knelt a group of people. It was very impressive; nothing could be more picturesque. Everything was in harmony with the scene: the rich and beautiful plain, the far off hills, of which the Puig Major was most conspicuous, the small villages that dotted the slopes like nests on the hill sides. Grey and ancient, solitary and deserted they seemed, with their small churches, and an occasional monastery uprearing its gloomy walls, once the scene of cloistered monks, now

silent and abandoned or turned to secular and profane uses. The very greyness of the skies threw a certain solemn tone over all that seemed to fit in with the devotions of these kneeling figures, who cling to their crosses and their superstitions with a persistence and a fervour that, however mistaken, prove the steadfastness of their faith in the unseen.

We went our way, longing for sunshine, the one thing wanting in our day's happiness. The Puig Major was still cloud-capped, and the cloud never lifted. It would lift at twelve, A. said, for he looks at the bright side of things, or appears to do so. In consequence of this prophecy we went on in hope; a hope unfulfilled. But this is only one's experience of life; and that we still go on forever hoping, ever sanguine, ever thinking the world beautiful, and that there is an earthly paradise in store for us as well as a heavenly, only proves the truth of the saying that Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

We journeyed through the loveliest country. There were palm trees, with their rich bronze clusters of dates hanging in four quarters like the four points of the compass. There were orange groves in perpetuity; endless groves both of oranges and lemons; the latter still green and unripe. The orange trees were loaded with fruit, and their splendid foliage spread over the land like a brilliant mantle. Dry walls, old and crumbling, bounded our road. Beside us was the wide, tortuous bed of a torrent. It had run almost dry. The rainy season sets in only when the new year has well entered upon its reign. What water there was added much to the beauty of the landscape. In the gardens surrounding the farm houses there grew immense rose bushes, each tree containing hundreds of blossoms small but sweet scented, and all at our disposal.

And ever before us was our goal, the Puig Major, looking like a pilgrimage that ought to atone for a life's sins.

Up to a certain distance the level road made our work easy. Then began the ascent. We passed through a small mountain village, and soon after left all civilisation behind us. Our path narrowed and wound amongst the hills. On far-off slopes people were at work, and a girl's bright voice went ringing through the air. It was the most musical voice I have heard in Mallorca, and for the first time there seemed something like melody in what she sang.

The hills closed in upon us. There was just room for the mountain torrent to make its dashing way into the plains below. Here and there on a fig tree we found a last fig of the season, but I cannot say that we ever left it behind us. We accepted it as a prize. The road itself was very frightful, a self-inflicted treadmill; a series of loose stones and steps than which nothing on earth is more tiring.

No one in penal servitude ever worked so hard as we did that day. Yet with the inconsistency of human nature we thoroughly enjoyed it. Of course if one broke stones on the road for pleasure, although

it is convict work, one would imagine it to be the height of enjoyment.

But this especial road up to the Puig Major must be the very worst in the world. It cannot have a rival. Loose stones frequently brought some of us down upon our knees. The very mule occasionally staggered and stumbled. Sometimes it would become

MARIQUITA AND ROSITA.

almost perpendicular in the steeper places, and how the paniers kept on remains a miracle to this day.

Our party became detached and straggling, and I was soon far behind the others. A. and B. were ahead. H. C. went in for what he called his regulation step of twenty-seven inches, a sort of seven-leagued stride without the seven-leagued boots. I came last of all, in company with the mule, and once (I tell you this in confidence), I gave in and mounted it for half an hour.

That one half hour saved me. I was a long way behind, and no one saw my humiliation. It was a horrible motion. I mounted the rug between the paniers, and you cannot imagine a more uncomfortable seat. My legs disappeared, but I never knew where or how. The mule ambled with a kind of wobbling motion that quickly produced a feeling of seasickness. I can describe it in no other way. Every now and then it stumbled, and I only saved myself from pitching over its head by hanging on to the mane. The paniers swayed from side to side, exactly as a vessel rolls at sea. Once they turned round and I found myself on the ground, feeling as if the world had turned upside down. But it was I who had done so, not the world. The boy stopped the mule and put everything right again, but I had had enough of the animal. Henceforth, come what might, I would trust to my own powers.

I rather began to repent my folly in ascending the Puig Major. A. and B. were always far ahead. To them the ascent was child's play, as it was to H. C., who went swinging on with his everlasting regulation-step, until I almost wished the earth would open and swallow him up. It was very provoking; but I had the best of it, inasmuch as I kept up with the mule, which bore the supplies. I know they were all a little uncomfortable, fearing that I should find it necessary to draw largely upon the wine.

Yet, with all its drawbacks, it was a strangely pleasant expedition. Occasionally our pathway opened out upon a broad mountain side, and we found ourselves in a small wood with a gentle stream running through it. Here we would all meet and rest, and look out upon the world below; valleys and passes and opposite hills. We sat on great stones that lay about the pools and the running water; and the mule waited patiently; and the boy every now and then took a sly peep into the paniers, evidently wondering how much of the good things would fall to his share.

Continual dropping will wear away a stone; step by step, the ladder of life is climbed; the heights are reached, and the downhill journey commences. It is then that the years begin to pass as a tale that is told. So, by patience and perseverance, we may climb the highest peak in the world.

But, there are conditions to this: many of these lie in the elements, as they did to-day. We went onwards and upwards with a courage that was meritorious. We continued to hope against hope with the persistence of sanguine temperaments. A.'s everlasting "Wait until twelve o'clock," had its effect upon our imaginations, if not our reason. The Puig Major was still cloud-capped. Once, indeed, it all rolled away for a few moments, leaving the peak clear and sharply outlined. "I told you so!" cried A., and H. C. gave a feeble cheer which died half uttered, for before the hills could carry on the fainting echoes, down swept a mass of vapour more dense than ever, and the Puig Major became once for all invisible.

For twelve o'clock struck and brought no change, except a change for the worse. The higher we ascended, the further we plunged into the mire. The atmosphere grew cold and creepy. We passed into the clouds, which enveloped us like a Scotch mist. Les beaux esprits se rencontrent, and we found that a Mallorcan mist and a Scotch mist differed in name only. Everyone felt very agueish; and as at the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, each man called out for his sack in which to put his tools (for which reason the word sack is the same in all languages), so now every man called for his flask. "A good pull and a strong pull, and a pull altogether." This was their motto. *I* had provided myself with a delicious and health-restoring bottle of beef-tea, "made on the premises," as some of our English wine merchants do *not* say, but ought to say, and found this much more sustaining.

I saw A.'s face lengthen as we went deeper into the mist, and our temperature lowered, and our teeth began to chatter. It certainly was growing extremely uncomfortable. In continuing the ascent I felt that we were pursuing a phantom, working for an idea.

"If we persevere and reach the top, what shall we see?" I ventured to ask at last, very mildly.

Dead silence for a moment. Then: "Nothing," said A.

"So that we are taking all this trouble and exhausting this patient mule, simply to see Nothing?"

"I fear you have uttered only the words of wisdom," said A. with sphinxlike gravity.

"But we can shut our eyes and see nothing," cried H. C.

"Yes; and we can say we've been to the top without absolutely going there," returned A. "It comes to the same thing on a day like this. Let us all fancy ourselves at the top."

"I think it is no fancy that we are uncomfortable," continued H. C., whose regulation step had long since yielded to Scotch mist, and whose devotion to the flask quite equalled his attentions to the keg that day in the boat, when we paid our visit to the Dragon caves of Manacor.

No one answered; everyone shivered; great chattering of teeth; songs without words. Silence gave consent to that last remark.

And then by common agreement we halted. It was proposed, and carried unanimously, that we should bivouac where we were. The place was favourable to encamping, if any place could be called so in these exalted regions. There was a dry wall running along, built for some mysterious purpose, and we took shelter beneath it. But oh, how cold it was! I have never been so cold in my life; not even at the top of the North Cape, where, in the middle of July, we encountered hail and sleet and a rude easterly hurricane, and never so much as a tree for shelter. As for the midnight sun, we never saw a ray of it. It had fled from all this horrible climate, and taken refuge at the back of the more kindly North Pole.

To-day, on the Puig Major, it was even worse. The mist enwrapped us like rain, and chilled us to the bone. We all felt that we had a violent attack of rheumatic fever, without the fever—of which we should have been rather glad. The wind whistled and blew through the crevices of the dry wall, and caught the backs of our necks with a paralysing effect. Dislocation could hardly have been worse. That is a quick death; this was a slow one.

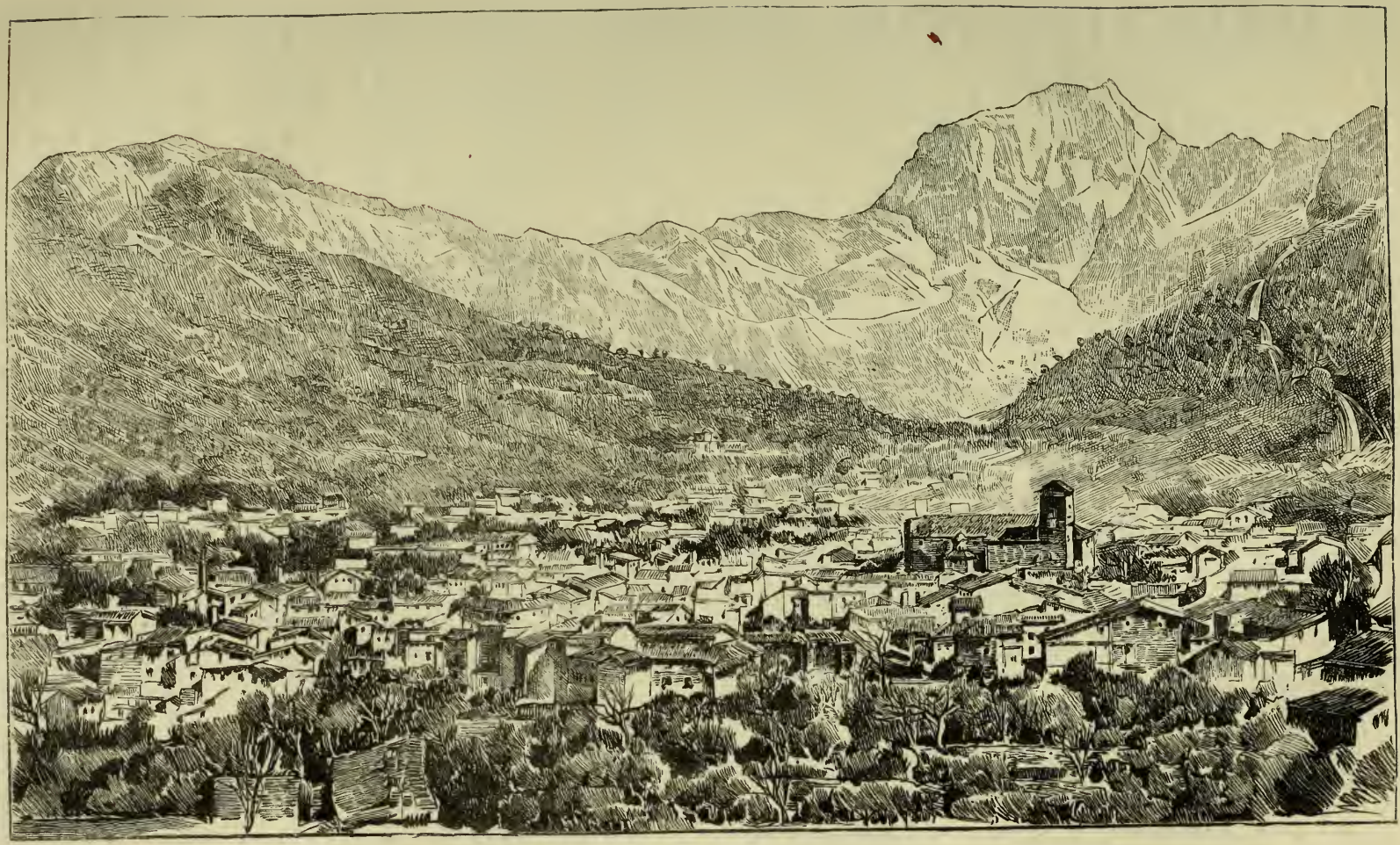
We could see nothing, but we felt a very great deal. As I was considered the least robust of the party, I received the most attention. If I was not looked upon as the ugly duckling, at least I needed more "looking up" than anyone else. So you see that a reputation for delicacy, whether deserved or not, has its occasional advantages. You are helped to the wing of the chicken, for instance, whilst someone else takes the drumstick.

B., with a self-sacrificing spirit that was simply beautiful, insisted upon lending me his ulster. Whilst we were reposing, it was gratefully received, but, when we began to go down hill again, I felt like a man in a dressing-gown; and not by any means his own dressing-gown. B., I think, is six feet four in his shoes, and consequently I had to hold up the ulster with both hands. I daresay it looked very graceful, but it felt extremely awkward. Moreover, my hands were not at liberty, so that I frequently slipped and came down with a humiliating determination. In other words, as Mdlle. Bouglinval, your French governess, used to say when, as children, we often came to grief: "Il a pris un billet de parterre sans payer." I fear we sometimes paid for it only too heavily in those days.

To-day we encamped behind a wall. The wind whistled through the crevices and nearly cut off our heads. I caught a stiff neck, from which I am still suffering. On our return, Rosita offered to iron it (a Mallorquin remedy for stiff necks), but lightning flashed from A.'s bright eyes, and thunder issued from H. C.'s Cupid's bow of a mouth, and Rosita fled one way and I escaped by another. I am certain that these two men, each, I have said, with such amiable capacities, will before long come to the same violent and tragic end as the Kilkenny cats that we read of in history.

Under the shadow of the dry wall, the paniers were dismounted, and the patient mule heaved quite a long-drawn sigh of relief. James spread our cloth and tried to unpack. But he was quite as frozen as anyone else, and the hard-boiled eggs slipped through his hands, and A. turned pale when he took up the wine bottles, and H. C. laid violent hands upon the chickens. Going down hill later on, James asked me, with quiet resignation, if I had had a pleasant day; and I confided to him my convictions that not one nail but many nails had been driven into my coffin by this mist-laden, path-broken expedition.

Fortunately our appetites were not paralysed. H. C.'s regulation step had developed special capacities. He ate four eggs to every one



SOLLER, PUIG MAJOR IN THE DISTANCE.

else's two, and appropriated a whole chicken to himself. Then, like Oliver, he asked for more, but I am glad to tell you that he didn't get it; for which denial he revenged himself upon the wine.

An old man came up leading a horse, and seemed much interested in our appearance and condition. Probably he thought we all felt very happy and comfortable. We should, indeed, have been in an earthly paradise if only we had had blue skies and sunshine. James offered the old man some refreshment: half a chicken, a few boiled eggs, and a cup of sparkling wine. Sparkling is employed as a metaphor, you understand. His eyes sparkled—this time the word is not a metaphor—but he would not embrace the golden opportunity. We wondered. He was evidently hungry, yet refused the tempting delicacies. It was certainly not shyness, for he made no scruple of looking on and assisting at our festive gathering.

The mule boy solved the mystery. James was offering the food with his left hand, and the Mallorquins have a superstition. They will take nothing given with the left hand, these remote peasants of the country. It would bring them ill-luck. Upon which James transferred the peace offering to the right hand, and it was at once gratefully accepted and disposed of.

I think the old man must have been unaccustomed to wine, for after this he became eccentric in his actions. Instead of continuing his way uphill to the unknown land whither he was bound, he finished his conversation with the mule boy, and then began to retrace his steps. I am persuaded he was under the impression that he was still ascending. However, it was his affair, not ours, and we left him to his own devices. One thing is certain: we sent him on his way rejoicing and comforted.

All this time we were wrapped in cloud, blinded by vapour, saturated by mist. Rheumatic pains shot about us like flashes of lightning. We felt like Rip Van Winkle when he awoke after his hundred years' sleep.

"Where is the summit of the Puig Major?" I asked, as we all made a move, and our joints began to grate like rusted locks, and creak like five-barred gates.

"Up there," replied A., pointing into the clouds. "Imagine that you see the dim outline of a peak. That's it. I am quite ready to accompany you, if you like to venture. It would take us another hour."

We all shuddered at such a death-blow proposition. James hastily restored the paniers to their place. The mule felt its burden had been considerably lightened. We left the fragments for any birds of prey that might haunt this mist-wreathed mountain, and began to descend. I stepped out boldly, gracefully holding up B.'s friendly ulster. Imagine me if you can. I feel that I am also exposing myself to your ridicule, but as a faithful chronicler I must be exact in my small facts.

"The downhill path is easy." I beg to draw the line at the downhill path of the Puig Major, which proves the exception. It is extremely difficult, shakes one to pieces, seems absolutely endless. Occasionally it becomes so steep that you have to run for it; and, as nature has not provided the human body with brakes, it is often extremely difficult to pull up. Sometimes you come against a solid body with a shock that knocks the breath out of you, and internally reduces you to a jelly.

Every now and then, in one of these steep declines, I caught my foot in the ulster, doubled up and rolled over like a hedgehog. It seemed very amusing to those who looked on. People have no sympathy on these occasions; no compassion. They laugh at you. I suppose it is human nature. Who ever does anything but laugh at anyone whose hat blows off, or whose umbrella turns inside out?

We came to a halt every now and then; rested upon the huge stones under the trees of the small mountain forests; listened to the rippling of the water; took breath and compared notes of wounds and bruises. I headed the list: was, so to say, in the sixth form, whilst the others had none of them even obtained their "remove."

We photographed each other in groups. The mule appeared splendidly. It always moved its head, and came out with two heads. The effect was extremely original. We think of sending it to the Royal Society of Anatomy, as a singular freak of nature: a two-headed Mallorcan mule! It would create a sensation. Learned professors would lecture upon the phenomenon, look wise, and give some very sage explanations of the matter.

In the last group, A. and I are skilfully posed. It is quite a tableau. I am standing in a pool of water, but just escape wetting my feet by using a couple of stones placed very far apart. My footing is consequently precarious, and I have to throw myself into an attitude. A. is offering me his flask, as if I were in the last state of exhaustion. This appearance is not assumed. I feel as if there were nothing left of me but my boots. Unfortunately A. places his stick under his arm, and it is so directed that it looks as if I were running him through the body. Altogether, we might be having a very comfortable little duel in the Bois de Boulogne, after the manner and custom of the excitable Parisians. But, perhaps, B.'s description is as good as any, who remarks that I come out like Ajax defying the lightning.

Luckily for Ajax, I have long since discarded the ulster. The last roll over was just one too many. H. C. grows vulgar upon the occasion—he who is generally so poetically refined—and says that I look like a battered Aunt Sally on a Derby racecourse, without the redeeming pipe; black eyes and swollen features and developments unknown to phrenology. I am too exhausted to retaliate, and ask him how he looked when we came off the rocks of Miramar, ragged and tanned, that past and gone Sunday. I shall never forget how

the Archduke stared at him, and how he really couldn't move away from the wall where he pretended to be sketching as if his daily bread depended upon it.

As we got lower down the hill the atmosphere improved, the temperature rose. We left clouds and mist behind us; our blood began to circulate. But the difficulties of our path seemed to increase.

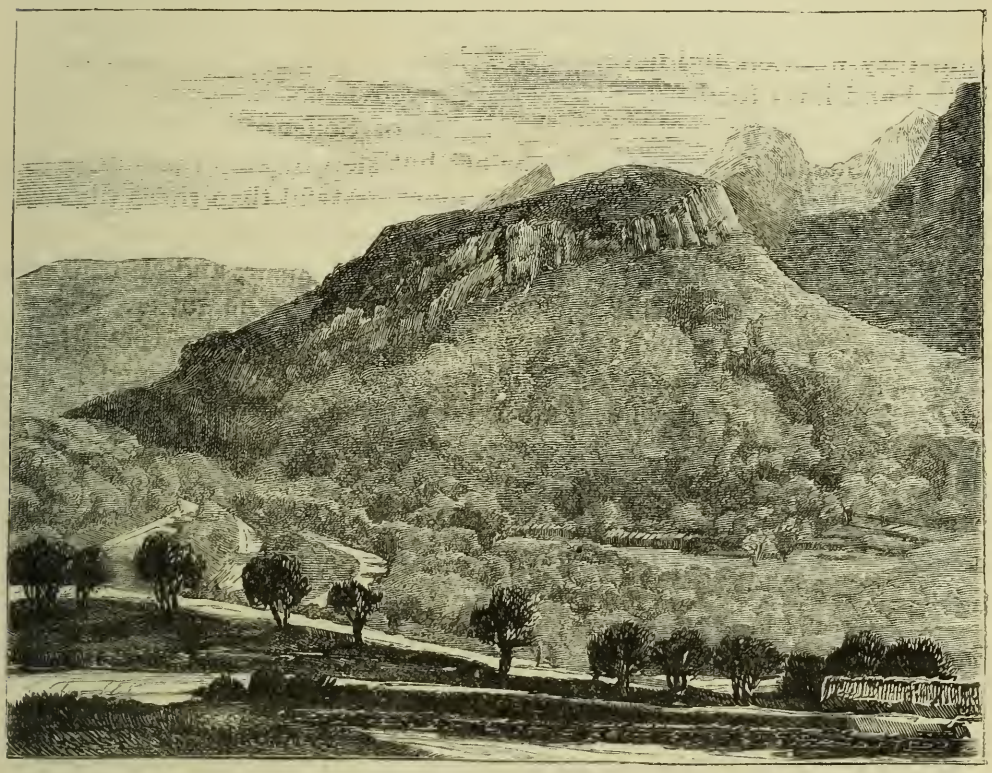
IN THE VALE OF SOLLER

The shades of evening were gathering. If night fell before we reached the plains, it would be almost impossible to get on.

At this stage A. and B. basely deserted us. They were a little way ahead and out of sight, and when we came to a place where two roads met, we could not tell which one to take. I have no organ of locality: H. C. lives up in the clouds; the mule-boy stood with his mouth wide open, utterly lost. James, who had kept with us, wouldn't hazard an opinion.

"They both lead downward, sir," he said, and perhaps both meet at the end."

It was a sensible remark, pleasantly vague. We made a shot for it, and turned to the right. I was on the very verge of expiring from fatigue, and we had no remedy at hand. We had the mule and the paniers, but A. and B. had carried off all the flasks. As soon as we get back to England, I intend to have them prosecuted by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. There are crimes that cannot be passed over.



ANCIENT OLIVE TREES.

Our right road very soon proved a wrong one. It led us in a very short time into the narrow, broken pathway of a dried-up torrent. Anything more terrible in the way of walking you cannot imagine. It wound and twisted about like a snake in agony. Its ups and downs were far worse than the uncertainties of life. It was a series of crumbling stones and small rocks. Of secure foothold, there was none. Often it was so steep that we simply had to slide down to the next landing stage. We were rolling and tumbling about the whole time. The very conies themselves would often have been tempted to turn backwards.

It was evident that we had lost our way, and turned out of the right track. Our only hope was that, as we were certainly descending all the time, and as all roads lead to Rome, so in the end we should find ourselves in Soller.

No doubt it was a very magnificent scene The valley into which we were descending was rich and fertile. Beautiful trees often overshadowed us. The only barren spot visible was this wild, rocky, and tortuous torrent pathway. On either side rose the splendid heights—large, expansive, interminable. Behind us—capricious fate!—the Puig Major had become clear and visible. Mists and clouds had departed with the going down of the sun. It was cruel.

For the sun had now set, and darkness was falling. We were falling also. It was no longer very possible to see one's way, and we frequently came to grief. The mule and the boy alone seemed to have the power of seeing, like cats, in the dark. It was wonderful how they went on and never paused, just as if they had been on a broad and level road.

Down below we could see the lights of Soller glimmering from the windows. They were still afar off, but step by step the ladder of life is climbed. No vision was ever more grateful than these distant lights. Before entering the torrent path, I have told you that I was on the verge of expiring: this completed the affair, and I begged them to leave me to die, like Jane Shore, quietly in the gutter. They were perverse, and would not hear of it. I tried to bribe them, but that failed. I used threats, with a like result. Lights gleamed from the villages on the hill sides, and I implored them to take my bones to one of the cottages, and leave them there: for I was nothing but bones now: all flesh had long since disappeared. No; I might as well have talked to the mule; I could get nothing out of them, except an unsteady but determined downward course. At length I sank upon a stone. H. C. pulled up.

"Looks very like the end, certainly," he cried, with quite a cheerful ring in his voice. "How would you like to buried—in the ordinary way, or cremated?"

"I believe, sir," said James, "if you would take my arm, a little more would do it. I see the end of this pathway not ten yards ahead. I did think it was leading us to the bottomless pit, but the mule and the boy are waiting for us on the high road. We shall find it easy enough there."

So it proved. Once on the road the relief was so great that it brought with it the necessary stimulus for further exertion.

After all, it does not do to give in. It is cowardly, and shows nervous deficiency. With the necessity comes the power. We must all "dree our weird," but there are two ways of doing it. Depend upon it, if ever we come face to face in life with an insupportable burden, it has been absolutely and entirely of our own making. We lay weights upon our own shoulders grievous to be borne, but it is a consolation to think that perhaps even these are a part of our life's mysterious plan, in some way or other contributing to our highest development. We cannot tell why it should be so, any more than we can see the end of our lives from the beginning: any more than we

can solve the whole mystery of existence, explain the origin of evil, the plan of creation, or fathom the mystery of the great Atonement.

We have to leave all these questions, and it is wiser not to enter into unprofitable speculations, which would either destroy our reason or shake our faith. We must be content to possess our souls in patience. Nothing is more mysterious and incomprehensible than a great deal of the Seen, and we must be content to leave the Unseen to a day when for each one of us the mists must clear away and the veil be lifted, and we no longer see through a glass darkly.

It was plain sailing on the broad road. One by one in the dark we recognised the old landmarks we had passed in the morning. The orange and lemon groves were about us, but invisible. The fruit perfumed the air, and in this manner still threw out its unseen influence. Here again was the old cross, but the kneeling figures had disappeared. It was solitary and deserted, yet still pointing upwards. The stars were shining with intense brilliancy. I have told you how large and splendid they are in these latitudes, and, indeed, you have seen this for yourself. In England we have no conception of the beauty of a southern sky; southern or northern either; for I have seen them equally large and brilliant in the colder canopy of Norway.

To-night we traced all the well-known positions. The pointers were at their faithful task, indicating the North Star. The Signs of the zodiac followed in their course. Lower down, Orion, most beautiful of all the constellations, was followed by Sirius, which flashed and flamed and literally blazed with glory. Though in a most expiring mood, it was impossible not to be enthusiastic and absorbed in the majesty of the scene: these stars which, night by night, "take up their wondrous tale."

We went on our way, H. C. as fresh as ever, still keeping to his "regulation step" of twenty-seven inches, in a most irritating manner. The stream beside us looked dark and silent. The whole influence was weird and romantic. The air was warm and balmy, just as, on the Puig Major, it had been the opposite. This, at any rate, in H. C.'s words, was "grateful and comforting."

As we passed the first house in Soller, two shadows fell across our path, quickly followed by their substance: A. and B., full of apologies.

"How did we come to miss each other?" said A. "I had no idea we were so far ahead. When we found you were not in our track we shouted ourselves hoarse, but only the hills replied.—You look rather done up," turning to me compassionately.

"No wonder: you carried off all the flasks," was the only reply I condescended. "Would you mind handing me one of them?"

"With pleasure," replied A., "but—ahem—ahem—ahem—they are all empty. B. felt a sudden pain in the head. It was excruciating. I thought once it was all over with him. The fact is he is not used to mountain climbing and it has been too much for his heart.—Won't you take my arm?"

So arm in arm, forgiving and forgetting—it is impossible to be otherwise with A.—we went through the darkened streets of Soller. Lights gleamed from the houses, and in many a court we saw the quaint, old-fashioned, classical-looking lamp casting its glare upon human faces, throwing shadows upon the walls. The patient mule came on behind us, bearing its burden. We turned the corner—the very last turning in our pilgrimage—and in a few moments the hospitable doors of the Fonda del Pastor were thrown open to us. Everything was at once excitement at our appearance, commiseration at not having reached the summit of our ambition, congratulation at our safe return.

I sank into the nearest chair, and presently was carried upstairs, just like a wooden image in a procession—and I felt just as much in jeopardy. Of course this was all done in fun—I was quite capable of walking up. Rosita administered restoratives, having first of all obtained A.'s tacit permission to pay me so much attention. H. C., however, evidently resented it bitterly. A. and B. went in for pomegranates and anisette—such a mixture, you know. H. C. wrote a sonnet, under the inspiration of a cup of coffee. Presently we were all ourselves again, and met round the festive board. The old lady had prepared us everything of which Soller was capable. It was not exactly a Lord Mayor's feast, but here we are thankful for small mercies; and to-night, by comparison, the mercies were really abundant.

So ended our ascent of the Puig Major.

I never intend to ascend another, for I should never survive it. And nine times out of ten, in ascending mountains, you are disappointed. Either storms come on, or the summits are cloud-capped, or the sun never rises. Whatever it may be, something generally happens to mar the expedition. And sometimes, we know, the worst happens. This could not be in climbing the hills of Soller, and we all returned safe and sound from our pilgrimage. Yet, as you have seen, it was in one sense a failure—for we never reached the top of the Puig at all.

And now, to-night, in spite of so much hard and exhausting work, you see I have managed to take up my tale again, and write you a long letter.

H. C. is sketching on the other side of the table. He had a supply of soda water brought up into our sitting-room, and has gone in for it rather extensively. It is diluted with stronger waters, however; and I hear him murmuring and crooning to himself snatches of impromptu verse, of which the burden sounds very much like "Mariquitarosita," very crookedly pronounced. I daresay A. is dreaming very much the same sort of thing. Both are evidently living in a fool's paradise. Let them do so. "Les beaux jours de la vie" come only once in our lives.

It is far on in the night. Our windows are open to the balmy air.

Cockcrowing and caterwauling mingle their sweet sounds. The old watchman has passed by many a time since I took up my pen. All the town is in silence, and all the stars are travelling homewards. To-morrow—or rather to-day—we leave this beautiful old place, perhaps for ever. I shall do so with infinite regret. The lordly barouche is to be here at twelve o'clock to bear us away—like the Swan in *Lohengrin*, but the car is not quite so gilded, nor are the steeds so poetical. But I have a presentiment that something will happen: either it will break down on the road; or it will never come at all; or we shall be laid up with stiff joints and rheumatic fever, the result of Mallorcan mists on the Puig Major.

But whatever it may be, this must form the burden of my next letter—if I survive to write you another. For the present the pen falls from the hand, the eyelids refuse to remain open. H. C. declares that he cannot tell perpendicular from horizontal. I can quite believe it. Six empty soda water bottles, not one of which has fallen to my share, tell their own tale.

Yet, mystery of mysteries! I go over to examine his work, and it is perfect. A humorous sketch of us all, sitting under the dry wall on the Puig Major. We look intensely miserable and shivering. H. C. has his foot vindictively planted on A.'s prostrate form. I am in the agonies of a stiff neck. Afar off, most poetically put in, rising out of the mist like Aphrodite from the foam of the sea, appears a most perfect likeness of Rosita, who, like a ministering angel, is holding up a flat iron.

SWEET SUMMER HOURS.

Sweet summer hours! with fragrance filled,
The sunshine falls upon the lea;
The world is gay with music trilled
From every wayside bush and tree.
Could more melodious notes be heard
Than yonder lark's triumphant strain?
Yet, listening, my heart is stirred
To something less of joy than pain.

Sweet summer hours! Ah, wherefore must
Your fleeting charm our fall betray,
So swift to feed the cruel lust
Of earth's grim enemy, decay?
In vain with blind persistence strange
We think to hold time's treasures fast,
For even in our grasp they change
To tender memories of the past.

Sweet summer hours! Too briefly bright
The glamour lies o'er land and sea;
Too quickly merged in winter's night
Your presence here must ever be.
But give again your gracious store,
And win our thoughts to that blest clime,
Where death shall grieve us never more,
And beauty live untouched by time.

Sydney Grey.

SEVENTEEN.

I.

THAT old walled-in garden was a pleasant place in summer afternoons. The grass grew high beneath the apple-trees; the trees spread out their wide arms and made great patches of welcome shade; clove-pinks and tall white lilies and sweet-smelling mint and thyme grew close together amongst the currant-bushes near the wall, and all the air was sweet with perfume.

I loved that garden. It was the one spot where I could breathe freely and be happy. Aunt Maria never came there. Uncle Richard, if he strolled up and down sometimes, with his pipe and *Times*, did not frighten me. He smiled at me in a kindly way. Once he patted my head and asked if the girls were good to me; and on one memorable day he had taken my chin between his hands and looked long at me, with dim eyes with a look of sorrowful remembrance in them, and then said, "You are like your mother, Nell. God bless you, child."

Sometimes Rose and Letty, my cousins, would bring their book or needlework and sit beneath the trees reading or chatting, but that was not often. Aunt Maria kept Letty practising scales in the morning and Italian songs in the afternoon; and poor Rose got into trouble for every fresh freckle or gnat's bite, and seldom dared venture out. And sometimes, at rarer intervals, Will Donaldson would stroll up and down the weedy paths beneath the wall, and view the peaches and talk politics with Uncle Richard; and then, letting Uncle Richard pass on, would come and talk to me instead. But Will's presence never spoiled the garden for me.

Will was not my cousin. He was Aunt Maria's nephew. I was only Uncle Richard's niece. He was a well-connected, prosperous, altogether satisfactory relation, as all Aunt Maria's relations were. I was the poorest of all Uncle Richard's nieces, and that is saying much.

Will often stayed with us. Aunt Maria intended that he and Rose should marry by-and-bye; and when Will was not present, she talked of this plan quite openly.

"I do not see that you could do better, Rose," she would say with a judicial air. "Now *I*, if I had not thrown myself away upon your papa when I was too young to know any better, might have married whom I pleased. But *you*—you have no 'go' about you, Rose—and men *do* object so much to a skin that freckles. I was a very pretty girl—the prettiest complexion in the world; but at seventeen I married your papa, as you know, and there was an end of everything. But in your case it is different; you may be satisfied with Will, I think. The property is entailed, you know, and it *must* come to Will, though that other boy *is* the favourite son."

Rose would protest as much as she dared. But Aunt Maria over-ruled her objections peremptorily. "'Not want to marry!' Nonsense! Every girl wants to marry. 'Not want to marry *Will?*' I should be glad to know whom you mean to marry then! 'Will does not wish to marry you?' Stuff and nonsense! What does he come here for?"

No one could answer that last question satisfactorily. Perhaps he came for the fishing and shooting; perhaps he found it dull at home. But he did not come for the sake of Rose, and Rose knew that. Once I heard them talking together about Aunt Maria's scheme, and they were laughing gently, without a touch of self-consciousness or embarrassment. And once I heard him deliver a message from his brother, "that other boy," the favourite, but not the elder son. It was a very unimportant message. Aunt Maria herself might have heard it; but Will smiled and Rose blushed as he delivered it, and I understood then how hopeless my aunt's plans were.

It was my seventeenth birthday. I had brought my needlework into the orchard, and was sitting on the grass, where the boughs of the apple-trees made a pleasant shade, and was sewing now and then, by fits and starts, but thinking all the time. By-and-bye the garden door opened and shut, and a slow, sauntering step came down the path. I began to sew steadily then. I did not turn my head. It was only when Will stood just before me that I looked up. He threw away his cigar, put his hands into his pockets, and smiled down at me in a half-lazy, half-tender way. I went on sewing again, but those stitches were wrong, and I had, I remember, to pick them out next day.

"I like white gowns, you know," he said, musingly, after a minute, still looking down at me.

"Do you?" said I, with an involuntary glance at my own white gown, with the sunshine flecking it.

"Why don't other girls have their things made like that—all soft, you know, without any seams and edges?"

"Like this?" said I, looking up with a smile into the approving grey eyes bent down upon me. "There's no making in it. I made it myself. It's just a full body and a straight skirt; there's no trimming at all."

"It's white," said Will, a little vaguely. "Girls ought to wear white gowns: why don't they?"

"I don't know," said I. "*I* wear them because they wash."

Will looked up at the sky between the trees, and whistled softly to himself. Then his glance travelled downwards towards me again.

"It is your birthday to-day?" he said, in a lazy, questioning way.

"Yes."

"Do you like birthdays?"

"On the whole, I think not," I said, working more quickly, and making some pitifully irregular stitches to unpick.

"Why not?"

I hesitated. "I had birthdays when I was a child, you see," I said, foolishly, "and I always remember them."

"What have people been giving you for presents, Nell?"

I told him: "Letty made a pincushion for me. Rose gave me that song I sang last night."

There was a pause. "Girls wear lockets and trinkets and things sometimes," said Will, irrelevantly.

I laughed. "Yes, sometimes," I said.

"I suppose, now," said Will, "that you have plenty of things of that sort?"

I looked up wonderingly. His questions were a little purposeless, unless —— But that thought was absurd! Was it likely that Will should be thinking of buying a present for me? What could be more *un*likely! I was angry with myself for blushing.

"I have the ornaments mamma had when she was a girl," I said. "She gave them to me."

"Are there necklaces amongst them?" said Will. "I like necklaces, you know. But I daresay you have everything of that sort. Have you a pearl necklace, Nell?"

The question made me laugh. "No, nothing half so fine," I said.

Before Will had time to speak again, a clear, bell-like voice came from the other end of the garden: "Will! Will!"

"Here," shouted Will. "All right, Rose."

Rose was coming towards us, her sweet little fair face almost hidden by the garden hat she wore. "I have been looking everywhere for you," she said, addressing Will, who went to meet her. "Papa is wanting your advice about that colt Jackson wants to sell. Young Jackson has brought the colt up; and papa is in the yard, Will, and he wants you to go at once. Oh, Nell, *you* here!"

Will went slowly away, his hands in his pockets. Rose remained, seating herself on the grass and watching her cousin disappear.

"What do you and Will find to talk about?" she said pleasantly, when the garden door had closed.

"We have been talking about my frocks," I said lightly, with a little laugh. "When you came, Will was asking how many pearl necklaces I possessed."

Rose's clear blue eyes were regarding me a little anxiously. "Will talks great nonsense sometimes," she said. "You must not lay too much importance on what he says, Nell. He has been very kind to you lately—I have noticed it; but that is his way—he is kind to everyone ——"

"Yes, of course," I said promptly; and then I hurriedly changed the subject. But Rose was very quiet. She sat watching me as I sewed, giving only half her attention, I think, to my impersonal talk.

"You are looking very happy now-a-days, Nell," she said wistfully, after a while.

"Am I?" said I—"that's because it's summer."

Rose did not look less wistful after that explanation. My contentment evidently worried her. We sat chatting for a little while longer, then she rose and went back to the house, leaving me alone. I said I should follow in a minute, but the minute passed and I did not go.

Half an hour passed; I was still there. I forgot my sewing. It dropped on the grass beside me. I clasped my hands behind my head, and leant back against the apple-tree and looked up, as Will had done, absently, at the patches of blue between the boughs. Rose was right—I was happy—very happy! Why should I not be happy? It was summer time, and no one scolded me if I freckled.

Suddenly I started. Someone was speaking not far away:—

"Of course, I know you do not mean anything, Will. But Nell may fancy you do. I think, for her sake, you ought to be careful."

The clear, ringing little voice came from the garden, just beyond the orchard wall. It was Rose who spoke.

The lazy voice that answered was Will's. "Why for *her* sake?" he said. "You don't think Nell is falling in love with me? That's not very likely, you know."

"But indeed, Will, it *is* likely. Nell quite changes when you are here. She brightens—she changes altogether; I have noticed it."

"Does she? That is very sweet of her."

"Will, be serious."

"I am serious—profoundly so. What do you want me to do, Rose?"

"I want you to be more careful."

"Careful! Good gracious, Rose, I *am* careful! Careful? Why, I think of every word I say to her; I carefully reflect upon every sentence; I never was so careful with *anyone* as I am in my intercourse with Nell. I plane out every atom of meaning from my voice and my words and my very looks. I should like you to tell me how I am to be more careful than I am."

The voices were growing fainter in the distance. But I caught what Rose said. "Then you, too, have seen the danger?" she asked.

"What danger?"

"Of Nell's mistaking ——" Then the voices passed, and I heard no more.

My hands were still clasping one another, in careless, happy fashion, behind my head. I unclasped them. I sought about for my needlework. The needle had slipped out and was lost in the long grass. I remember that I searched for it as though its loss were an important matter. At last I found it. Then I went away slowly, homewards.

The sky was as blue as ever. The sunshine was warm on the lawn, the birds were singing loudly; in the house, every window was open, and the curtains waved lightly in the gentle breeze. It was stil summer. My heart was as cheerless as December.

II.

DINNER was over. Aunt Maria was laying down the law on some point of social etiquette to Rose and Uncle Richard, who were listening deferentially. Letty was singing her last Italian song. Will was leaning against the chimney-piece close to my chair, and kindly trying to talk to me.

At last I succeeded in escaping from the drawing-room. I went slowly upstairs in the dim light, and into the little shabby school-room, where Letty and I had written endless *thèmes* and *dictées* six months ago. I stood by the open window looking out.

I had been standing there two minutes, perhaps, when a step came along the corridor and stopped in the doorway.

"May I come in, Nell?" said Will, in a shamefaced, awkward sort of way; and he did so without waiting for permission. "I've brought you a little birthday-present," he continued, carelessly, holding out an untidy little paper package; "it's not much of a thing, you know—but I wanted to find out whether you had one already. And if you don't like it, I'll get something else."

I think I took the parcel and opened it in order to gain time. The untidy brown paper rolled off and revealed a little flat morocco case, and, lying on the soft lining of the case, was a little pearl necklace, pure and white. My heart was beating fast, my cheeks were burning, as I held out his present to give it back to him.

"I cannot have it," I said, childishly, ungraciously, because no suitable words would come. "I do not want it."

"Nell!"

"Please take it back," I said; and he took it humbly.

"I asked Uncle Richard about it, Nell," he said, awkwardly. "He thought there was no harm in my giving it. We are as good as cousins, you know—and I give Rose and Letty birthday-presents."

I said nothing. I looked out of the window again, down on the lawn and the lengthening shadows. My heart was swelling with indignation. "We are as good as cousins!" He had thought it needful to remind me that the gift was a cousinly gift, no more!—Was I so likely to mistake?

"Do accept it, Nell."

I shook my head. I think I was afraid to speak. Tears were very near, and I would not for the world have wept.

"Why will you not accept it?—Tell me."

I was forced to speak then. I answered almost fiercely. "I should hate it!" I said, passionately; and then I fled from the room, and upstairs to my bedroom, where I locked my door and cast myself down on the floor and cried as I had never cried in my life before.

Will went away next day. Aunt Maria wondered why he went so soon; but I could not wonder, for I heard Rose explain the reason lucidly to Letty.

"It's Nell," she said; "poor little Nell is half in love with him, and I think he sees it. He will not come down again for some time, he says, and I cannot help thinking he is wise."

"He shouldn't have flirted with her," said Letty, tersely.

"He wanted to be kind," retorted Rose, excusingly.

"Nonsense!" said Letty, who had something of Aunt Maria's decision of speech; "he flirted! If anyone had asked my opinion I should have said he was in love with her. No wonder she thought so too."

Rose sighed a little at Letty's hardness. "At all events he means to be careful now," she said; "he says he planes out every atom of meaning from his tone and words when he addresses her."

Three months passed before Will came again to see us. He came one Saturday and went away again on Monday, and he seemed to have come from some sense of duty rather than for pleasure, for he had little to say to anyone. He had nothing at all to say to me, though once or twice, looking up, I caught his glance fixed upon me anxiously. He had not needed on this visit to plane all meaning from his words, for he had scarcely addressed me once.

He did not come again till winter. Aunt Maria had taken the girls to town for a day or two—Uncle Richard was lunching with a friend that day. I had been to the village, and it was late in the afternoon when I returned home. The drawing-room was in darkness; the candles had not been lighted yet, and the fire was dull. I crossed the room, and sat down on the rug, stirring the dull fire into a blaze, and I think I sighed once or twice, for it was a little dull with the girls away. Then I became conscious that I was not alone. Someone came slowly across the room into the firelight and held out his hand to me.

"Nell," he said.

"What! Will?" I cried; and I am afraid that he knew I was glad—too glad—to see him.

"You did not expect me," he said. "I did not write. It was only this morning that I made up my mind to come."

"It is unfortunate," I returned, "for everyone is away. Aunt Maria and the girls are in London."

"I did not come to see Aunt Maria and the girls; I came to see you, Nell. You—you and Uncle Richard, you know," he added, in an explanatory way.

"Uncle Richard will be here presently," I said hastily.

There was a pause. I wished I could look at Will and speak naturally and be at ease. I gazed steadily away from him into the fire, conscious all the while that he was reading my face and interpreting my misery.

Nell," he said gently, after a while: "I have offended you in some way. I wish you would tell me what I have done. I made you angry about that necklace. I'm awfully sorry. I thought you might

like it, you know, and I wanted to give you something, because—because, you see, it was your birthday, and we're cousins."

I was saved from the necessity of answering. At that moment the door opened and Uncle Richard entered. I went away to change my dress, leaving uncle and nephew together.

The dinner that night was a very silent meal. Will and my uncle seemed to have quarrelled; Uncle Richard looked irate, Will gloomy. They stayed behind when I left the dining-room, and when they came into the drawing-room, nearly an hour later, Will looked more gloomy and my gentle uncle more irate than ever.

"I'm going again to-morrow, Nell," Will said, as he stood on the landing, and gave my candle to me, when I was shaking hands and saying good-night to him.

"To-morrow!" I repeated.

"Yes. Uncle Richard is sending me away. And perhaps he is right, you know. Good-bye, Nell; I shall be gone before you are up to-morrow."

"Good-bye," I answered. And I was pleased to think that my tone was as careless and matter-of-fact as his own. "It is a little cold for travelling, but I hope you will have a pleasant journey; it is quite fine to-night—starlight, see. Good-night—good-bye." And then I went lightly, smilingly upstairs, and tried to sing as I brushed my hair, and looked out of window at the cold, grey, starlit sky, and tried to sing again, and finally cried myself to sleep.

The days and weeks and months passed very slowly after that. February went by; Will did not come again. I remembered every day why he did not come—he needed to be "careful" lest I should fall in love with him—and the remembrance was always enough to make my cheeks burn with shame and indignation. March, April, May passed. June came; and to-morrow would be the twenty-eighth of June, my birthday.

I had taken my sewing into the orchard again, for Aunt Maria was scolding everyone indoors. It was a pleasant day. The sunshine was hot on the grass, but a gentle breeze was touching the tree-tops and making a cheerful flutter and rustle in the air. I remember all that now; at the time I do not think I noticed anything cheerful about the day. The seam I was sewing was long and a little dull—and what was there to do when the seam was done?

The garden-gate opened, and swung slowly to again. I looked round quickly. There was Will. He was coming towards me, winding his way between the trees.

I let my work fall and rose up to meet him. He took the hand I held out to him, and for a moment or two he stood looking down, saying nothing. It was almost as though he had been hungering and thirsting for a sight of me. If I had not known better, I might have thought that Will loved me.

"I wish you could say you are glad to see me, Nell," he said.

"I can say so," I replied, careful not to speak too warmly.

"But not *very* glad—not as glad as I am to see you," he cried: and I let him have it so. I knew how glad I was, but it was as well that he should not know.

"I have come to wish you many happy returns of the day," he continued.

I looked up at him wonderingly. But I remembered that he was "always kind to everyone."

"You have come a day too soon, then," I said quietly.

"Yes, I know. I grew impatient as the end of my time drew near. Uncle Richard forbade me to speak to you until you were eighteen, Nell—but these last twelve months have been a fierce trial to my patience and endurance. Yesterday I felt I could stand it no longer, and I have come. Nell, say anything to me—tell me to wait—make me wait fifty years if you will, only give me some hope that at the end of the fifty years you will listen to me. Do not send me away altogether."

"Send you away, Will? I do not understand," I said.

"Nell, I love you. I want you for my wife."

I looked up at him steadily, searchingly. The conversation I had heard between him and Rose came back to me. Came back to me? Had it ever been absent from my thoughts? "Thank you, Will," I replied; "I am very sorry, but I *must* send you away."

"Then send me away with a little hope. Nell, I have waited patiently all this year—I have obeyed Uncle Richard—I have not spoken to you—you do not know what it has been to wait and say nothing. You were too young, he declared, to know whether you loved or were indifferent. He had married my Aunt when she was seventeen, and she had reproached him ever since. He made me promise to say nothing until your eighteenth birthday. I have been slavishly obedient to him—I put a guard on my tongue, on my very tones; and when that became too hard I stayed away. Nell, it is six months since I have even caught a glimpse of you. Give me a little hope to carry away with me now."

I do not know what I said. Somehow Will understood. When, an hour later, we went back to the house, I had promised that I would marry him.

"Aunt Maria will prophesy repentance for you, Nell," he whispered, as we entered the house.

"I think she will prophesy repentance for you," I said.

I think she prophesied repentance for us both. But that was ten years ago and we have not repented yet.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY was born in August, 1792, at his father's country seat of Field Place in Sussex. The Shelleys were a good old family, and young Percy was the heir presumptive to a baronetcy. His grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, who was still alive when he was born, and lived for many years after, is said to have been a man full of quaint, clever eccentricity, a fact which may, in some measure, perhaps, account for his grandson's genius.

Little Percy was, from the first, a strange, unexpected nestling in the home. His parents had never dreamt of having such a son, and from the beginning they did not quite know what to do with him. He was physically delicate; he was sensitive; he was imaginative; from his earliest childhood he wrote verses instead of playing with his toys; a harsh glance made him cry, and sweetstuff made him sick; how could such an incomprehensible changeling have found the way into the strictly orthodox nursery at Field Place, mother and nurse and aunt asked themselves in bewildered consternation.

The boy was first sent to school at Wareham, then at Brentford. He was bright and intelligent in his studies, and gifted with a most remarkable and retentive memory. He was a great reader, though he never especially excelled in the one aim and object of all school learning in those days, classical knowledge. He was not a great favourite with either his teachers or companions; none of them seem to have understood him; he was too proud, too fanciful, too reserved to be popular.

From Brentford he went to Eton, where his character was much the same as it had been in his earlier boyhood. He met here, however, among the tutors, with a Dr. Lind, who was probably the first real friend Percy Bysshe Shelley ever had. Dr. Lind, who must have had a keen eye for boys, discerned that there was something uncommon in young Shelley, and took pains to draw him out and develop his mind. He helped him in his chemical studies, of which he was at this period deeply enamoured; he cultivated his taste; he treated with respect his many strange, sensitive fancies. When, during one of his holidays, the lad had a dangerous fever, which so greatly affected his excitable brain and irritable nervous system that his father talked of sending him, on his convalescence, to a lunatic asylum, Dr. Lind flew to him, and ministered to him so soothingly, and managed him so well, that before very long he took him back with him quite cured, both in mind and body, to Eton.

Thus far Dr. Lind's influence over young Shelley was productive of good; but in one respect it is to be lamented. The lad had already a sceptical turn, and his master and friend, himself a sceptic, en-

couraged it. The result was that his religious faith grew more and more unsettled, until he gained before he left Eton the title of "Shelley, the Atheist."

At Eton young Shelley flashed often into brilliant Latin verse, and began to write English poetry which was already worth something. Pliny was his favourite Latin book; his affection for natural history made him love it so well that he translated more than half of it into English.

Young Shelley's devotion to the study of natural history and chemistry, did not, however, always lead to such peaceful and scholarly results as copying out pages of Pliny in his mother tongue. One day the inhabitants of the cottages round a certain common near Eton were startled by a resounding crash. Out flew dames and damsels, children and grandsires, screaming that the French were come—a possible event which, in those days, haunted all timid minds. But what they saw was no advancing Gallic column. It was one of their favourite old trees, which grew on the border of the common, descending to earth, shattered into splinters, after a most unaccountable flight which it had taken skyward. After some enquiry, the mystery was cleared up. Master Percy Shelley had been trying to ignite gunpowder by means of a burning glass, and had succeeded so thoroughly that he had blown up the tree.

Shelley's departure from Eton was of a sudden and not very pleasant character. He was not a favourite, in general, with his schoolfellows, who took, many of them, a mischievous pleasure in provoking his sensitive, irritable pride. At length, one day, one of them carried so far this dangerous game, that young Shelley took out his penknife, and, in a fit of ungovernable passion, drove it into his tormenter's hand. The result was that the culprit was brought before the head master, Dr. Keates, and summarily dismissed from the school.

The circumstance was, no doubt, a very distasteful one to all at Field Place; but Shelley himself does not seem to have been greatly troubled by it. He began already to give much of his time to literature, and was probably most fully, according to his own opinions, indemnified for all passing disgrace at Eton by some of his poems finding their way into print, and by his receiving £40 from a publisher for a romance called "Zastrozzi." This latter was a remarkable book for a lad of seventeen; but it has died a natural death, as perhaps it deserved to do.

Having thus made his first appearance in print, Shelley did the next orthodox thing for a young poet: he fell satisfactorily and comfortably in love. The object of his affection was his pretty cousin, Harriet Grove, who seems fully to have returned his feelings. For some time the pair were allowed to correspond, and, though so young, were regarded in a certain way as promised to each other.

Shelley now went to Oxford, where he did not especially distinguish himself in the ordinary collegiate fashion, though he did in another

but not exactly desirable way. His chief friend at the University was a Mr. Jefferson Hogg, a man of cultivation and talent. The pair put their heads together and produced a volume of poems, which was published under the title of "Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson." Margaret Nicholson was a poor mad woman who had attempted the life of George the Third and had since died in confinement. The title of the book is sufficient to make us understand that it was not precisely the sort of production for College dons to regard with a favourable eye.

This literary escapade would, however, probably have been overlooked, had it not been for another and more serious offence. Shelley now began to develop openly his sceptical proclivities, and at length published a pamphlet entitled "The Necessity of Atheism." Hereupon the College authorities rose in a storm of indignant wrath, and young Shelley was expelled from the University, as he had been from Eton.

Shelley no doubt regarded himself as a martyr, but the satisfaction of looking upon himself in this light was a good deal dimmed by two circumstances: his father refused him any further allowance, and Miss Grove's relations insisted upon her breaking off all further connection with him.

A bankrupt thus in purse and heart, Shelley went and lived in London, making the most he could out of his brains. His sisters, who had always taken a certain pride in him, made a little collection for him out of their pocket-money, and, not being allowed to give it him themselves, confided the task of carrying it to him to an old schoolfellow of theirs—a Miss Harriet Westbrook, a pretty girl, who came of a designing family: an all too dangerous ambassador to be sent to a youthful, susceptible poet.

If Shelley had lived in the days of Astrology, it surely would have fallen out that, on the night of his birth, the name of "Harriet" would have been seen written in starry characters in the sky. No sooner was he free from one young lady of that name than he was entangled with another who bore it. Harriet Westbrook was a pretty blonde, well-endowed as to hair, but poorly as to brains, of which commodity, however, her elder sister, Eliza, possessed a double share. Mr. Westbrook, the father, was a retired innkeeper. Consequently the visits of the presumptive heir to a baronetcy to his house, and the fact that he was evidently attracted thither by the charms of the youngest daughter, were regarded as rare treasures which must be cultivated for the general family good. Perspicacious Eliza made up her mind that the half-ensnared quarry should not be allowed to escape.

Shelley most decidedly never regarded Harriet Westbrook with any deep affection. It was a passing fancy wakened in a young poet's soul by a fair face. It is probable that at this period Harriet Grove was still, in reality, his heart's queen, and that he began his sentimenta

flirtation with Harriet Westbrook merely with the feeling that it would help to blot out sad memories. He let himself, however, be heedlessly drawn on and on, the art of sister Eliza and the bright eyes of Harriet both combining to work the spell, until in an unwary moment, he asked Harriet to elope with him. The matter was supposed to be a secret between the lovers, but no doubt on the night when the elopement took place, the whole Westbrook family were sleeping with one eye open and with both ears very wide open indeed. The pair fled to Edinburgh, and on their arrival there, Shelley, though probably he was already beginning to repent his hasty act, was too much of a gentleman to do anything but marry the girl who had left her home and forfeited her reputation for his sake.

Mr. Timothy Shelley was now induced to make his son the small allowance of two hundred a-year, and upon this and the fruit of his pen the young couple lived. In the course of a year or two after his marriage, Shelley wrote and published "The Revolt of Islam," which brought him at once much fame and some money, and immediately and thoroughly established his name as a poet. It is inferior to his later works, but no just critic could fail to own that the poem bore upon it the trade-mark of original genius.

Shelley and his wife led a wandering life. Now they were living in Wales, now in Devonshire, now in Ireland. Go where they might, however, they had always with them a so-called domestic blessing in the shape of Miss Eliza Westbrook. That young lady was resolved to keep as close as she could to her embryo-baronet brother-in-law. She insisted upon it that dear Harriet and the babies, who were arriving periodically, could not get on without her, and she stuck with affectionate persistency to the side of the pair. It is probable that her presence helped to widen the rapidly-growing breach between Shelley and his wife, who every day was growing more and more distasteful to him. The charm her personal attractions had at first had, in some degree, for him, had quickly staled with custom, and he had found how utterly inadequate the shallow soul and uncultivated mind behind the pretty face were to satisfy his ideal of a life's companion. Shelley, however, still for a while treated her with outward respect, and even re-married her in London in order to make more certain of the legitimacy of their children.

But it was impossible that such a loose tie as bound him to Harriet could hold with security a man of Shelley's character and opinions. He met in society Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and at once the two were drawn with irresistible attraction towards each other. Shelley had no fixed religious principles to restrain him; his home with Harriet and her officious, meddling sister was thoroughly unsympathetic and cold to him; Mary loved him, and showed it in every look and tone. Thus it came to pass that, before many months had gone by, he and Mary were living together on the Continent, and Harriet Shelley was left alone with her children.

To make a painful story short, Mrs. Shelley at first bewailed her position far more because of the many unpleasant things it brought upon her than because of any strong love she had borne her husband. She then drifted into some connection in which her affections were concerned, and on the breaking off of this liaison, went and deliberately drowned herself.

Upon Harriet's death Shelley at once married Mary Wollstonecraft, to whom his attachment grew more and more devoted and tender. She was a woman of great talent and high intellectual attainments ; a woman who could feel with him and think with him ; a woman who had given herself to him heart and soul. Her influence over Shelley was no doubt high and noble, and when we blame her misconduct we must first remember that she was brought up in a free and easy code with regard to morality. Shelley's married life with her was all sunshine as far as she was concerned ; he never, in the faintest degree, swerved in his allegiance to her. It was an ideal union of a poet and a woman of letters : for Mary Shelley was an authoress of no small repute in her time, and had Shelley met her before he fell in with Harriet Westbrook and her family, his story would have been without more than one shadow which now rests upon it.

On the death of his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, the poet inherited an income of a thousand a-year, which put him and his household into easy circumstances for the rest of his life. He took a house at Marlow, in Buckinghamshire, and there he and Mrs. Shelley lived for two years. During this period much of his time was spent in going about among the poor of the neighbourhood, performing deeds of the most devoted, self-forgetting love and charity. He even walked a London hospital in order that he might be able to better minister to the weak and suffering around him. He nursed one bad case of ophthalmia so assiduously that he caught the disease himself and suffered from it very severely.

We have no space here to discuss Shelley's religious opinions. In his boyhood and early manhood the bark of his atheism was probably much worse than its bite. His acts of self-sacrificing love and pity among the poor were certainly most christian-like, and there are some lines in "Prometheus Unbound," which awaken a hope that, before he died, a ray of light from above had shone into his soul.

Shelley's was a most thoroughly true, consistent character. He was so perfectly faithful to his convictions, that, when he first married, he forfeited two thousand a-year because he refused to go against his principles by entailing his property. He has been accused of telling strange romances about himself, and his doings, and adventures ; but this was no doubt partly owing to his excitable natural imagination, and partly to the effect produced upon his nerves by the frequent use of laudanum, which he had contracted a bad habit of taking in order to gain relief from a painful disease to which he was all his life subject.

The most prolific period of Shelley's genius was after his marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft. It was then that all his master-pieces sprang, one after another, in radiant strength from his brain. No doubt the depth of calm which there was in his love for Mary, and her discerning influence in making him turn all his powers in their right direction, and her judicious criticisms, had something to do with the rich development of his poetic gift during these years.

When Shelley gave up his house at Marlow, he went with his wife and children to Italy, where the rest of his life was spent, residing now at one Italian city, now at another. An especially bright and interesting picture flashes before us of the period he spent at Pisa. We see a face of wondrous, manly beauty—yet a face that tells a terrible tale of glorious gifts misused, of evil passions given their evil way—close to that of Shelley, and we know it is that of Byron, who met him at Pisa and became his intimate friend. We see most lustrous, dark, Italian eyes shining graciously on him, and we know they are the eyes of the Countess Guiccioli. We see a lovely Italian girl looking up into Shelley's face with rapt devotion in her gaze, and we know that this is the Countess Emilia Viviani, a young Italian lady whom our English poet most chivalrously aided in her escape from imprisonment in a convent and in other troubles. We see a man, with singularly kindly intelligence written on his brow, holding close communion with Shelley, and we know that he is Leigh Hunt.

But the closing scene is at hand, and we must glance at it. In 1822, Mr. and Mrs. Shelley took a house on the Riviera with a Lieutenant Williams and his wife, congenial friends whom they had learned to know and love in Italy. The Casa Magna, the name of the house thus jointly inhabited, was situated between Lerica and Sant Arenzo. Part of the time of their residence there was employed at Genoa by the two gentlemen in superintending the building of a little schooner which was destined to be a yacht for cruising in the Mediterranean. The vessel was, no doubt, an object of pleasant interest to the amateur ship-builders, but they had far better have kept it as a mere toy model than have thought of using it as a sea-worthy craft.

In this schooner Shelley sailed to Leghorn to visit Leigh Hunt and discuss with him a project for starting a magazine. The journey to Leghorn was accomplished in safety, but on the voyage back, a sudden squall came on and the vessel sank with all on board.

Such is the story of Shelley, a great genius whom we love in spite of all his many errors.

ALICE KING.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

By Sarah Doudney.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE BRIDGE.

BEATRICE struggled resolutely with herself for a few seconds, and wiped away her tears. But the face that she lifted to Aunt Jane was pale and sad.

"I am sorry to have been so foolish," she said quietly. "Your words are not to blame at all. I was not happy when I came out this morning."

Jane Earle's kind heart yearned to comfort the girl.

"I hope you have had no bad news, my dear?" she said, laying a hand on Beatrice's arm, and looking at her with sympathising eyes.

"No—not that. But Mr. Redburn has been saying cruel things about some one I love."

Was there ever yet an old maid who did not prick up her ears at the first hint of a love affair? Jane had always been more romantic than her sisters. And it was so seldom that any girl came to her with a love story to tell, that she could not refrain from encouraging Beatrice to speak on.

"Ah, that is very hard," she sighed. "Perhaps he thinks you are too young to—well—to decide on a certain important matter."

"I am nineteen; that is not very young. No; my youth has nothing to do with the things he has said. He has taken a most unwarrantable dislike to the man I am engaged to marry."

"But why—why, my dear child?"

"Because his mind has been poisoned," replied Beatrice, her deep eyes looking steadily into Aunt Jane's placid face. "Because Colonel Lindrick has told him that there is a stain upon my lover's character. Because Godwin is falsely accused of stealing the Countess Gradizoff's ruby necklace."

Jane Earle took a step backward, and leaned for support against the brickwork of the bridge. Giving one quick glance along the road to make sure that no one was near, she gasped out her next question.

"Do you mean that you are engaged to my nephew?"

"I have been engaged to him ever since December," answered Beatrice, with quiet frankness. "And of course he has told me everything. You don't know that he is working hard to pay the full

value of the necklace. You don't know that Mr. Corder has taken him by the hand, and is helping him to get on in the world?"

"Mr. Corder!" echoed Jane, with a little shudder. "That vulgar old man!"

"He is not vulgar. He is quick-sighted, and honourable, and true. When you all turned your backs upon your dead brother's only child, he believed in him, and rescued him from poverty and despair. Your hearts have hardened against the little boy who played at your knees, and lisped his first words into your ears. But he is not utterly forsaken."

Jane Earle's lips were quivering, and tears had begun to trickle over her wax-like cheeks. She had rested her basket of flowers on the edge of the parapet, but her trembling fingers lost their hold upon the handle, and it fell into the stream.

"Think what he must have suffered," Beatrice went on. "No, you cannot think. Only God knows how bitter that suffering was. I shall go home as quickly as I can—I do not want Mr. Redburn's money. I want Godwin; that is all."

There was a moment's pause, filled up by the loud singing of the merry stream. And then Jane Earle began to speak in a tremulous voice.

"I have always loved the poor boy," she said. "But what could we say or do—Dorothy and I? He offered to take charge of the necklace; that was the worst part of it all; that is what Caroline cannot forget. And we thought—we feared—that he had deposited it with some one who would lend him money on it. Those things are often done, I believe, when men are in distress; but I do not understand such transactions. It is all too hard for me. Poor dear Godwin, I have never forgotten him. Give him my love, and say that his aunt Jane prays for him every night."

"Bid me say that you believe in him. That would be a greater comfort," answered Beatrice softly.

The old lady lifted her hand with a helpless gesture.

"I don't know whether I ought to believe in him or not. But, yes, yes—say anything that you think right. I like you for loving him so well. What a spirit you have! You would even have dared to say all this to Caroline. There is no one near; and I will kiss you, my dear, just for poor Godwin's sake."

Beatrice stepped nearer to the poor, shaken old woman, and received and returned her kiss.

No sooner was the little ceremony over, than Jane bethought herself of all that was due to her position as a Miss Earle. Supposing any of the townsfolk should come along, and find her crying on the bridge! She had a vague fear that her mantle was twisted, and her bonnet all awry. And then there was the loss of the basket—Dorothy's own favourite basket. What would they think when she went home, and confessed that she had dropped it into the stream?

"Don't cry any more," said Beatrice, arranging her dress with gentle hand. "Your bonnet is all right, and your eyes are only a little red. I am afraid I have done wrong to upset you so much. But when I am gone, you will think of me kindly, and I shall talk of you to Godwin, often, in the days that are to come."

Somewhat soothed, poor gentle Aunt Jane took her leave of this strange girl, whom she liked and feared, after the fashion of timid people. And then she went homeward, through the cowslip meadows, still lamenting the lost basket, and sighing and murmuring to herself. But before she had crossed the last field that divided her from the house, she had grown a little calmer, and had even stooped to gather a few more cowslips.

"I will say nothing of this at home," she thought. "If only Caroline does not see anything unusual in me I can keep the affair to myself. Dorothy will be vexed about the basket, and I shall pretend that I was afraid of her anger. Dear, dear, I don't like pretending anything; but what am I to do? It is all so puzzling, and *so* confusing!"

After lingering a little longer on the old bridge, Beatrice, too, turned back to the high road, and retraced her steps to Colonel Lindrick's garden gate. She felt unusually tired and spent. Her heart ached with a dull pain, and there were throbbing pulses in her temples. The long garden path was deserted by all save the bees and birds, who seemed to welcome her return with jubilant hum and song. She gained the house without being observed, and met no one but the parlour-maid as she went upstairs.

"Say to Miss Lindrick that I hope she will excuse me at luncheon," she said, wearily. "My head aches, and I will lie down for an hour or two."

A few minutes later there was a knock at the door of her room, and the maid entered with wine and sandwiches, and a kind message from Alma. Beatrice ate and drank a little, and then lay down on a comfortable couch in a shady corner, and closed her eyes, longing earnestly for a spell of forgetfulness.

She had not expected that sleep would come; but she was overwrought and over-worn, and her eyes quickly closed. Her slumber was long and deep; it was not broken by any sounds in the house, nor by the noise of wheels on the carriage-drive. She woke at last, just as a little clock on the mantelpiece was striking four; and then, for an instant or two, she wondered where she was.

The sleep had left her strengthened and refreshed. She rose, washed her face, smoothed her hair, and went quietly downstairs into the drawing-room.

Colonel Lindrick and his daughter were there together, talking with grave faces and low tones. The entrance startled them a little, but they met her with the kindest inquiries.

"Are you feeling better?" asked Alma, coming forward anxiously.

"We were afraid that Mr. Redburn upset you very much this morning."

"He has upset himself," said Colonel Lindrick, with a seriousness that was real enough. "If he goes on in this way I don't believe he will live through the year. In his state of health a hurried journey to town is simply madness!"

"A journey to town," cried Beatrice. "Why has he gone to town?"

"Did you not know?" said Alma, quickly. "Did you not see him drive off in the carriage at half-past two?"

"I saw and heard nothing; I have been soundly asleep for hours. But what can have taken him so suddenly to town?"

"Did he say anything this morning about law-business?" asked the Colonel quietly. "Was there no hint of this journey?"

"Nothing at all was said about business. We had a most unpleasant talk, and both lost our tempers. If," added Beatrice, haughtily, "he has gone to make a fresh will in which my name is not mentioned, I shall be unfeignedly thankful."

"My dear young lady, I hope you did not make that remark in his presence," said the Colonel, in a tone of kind remonstrance. "You must not be so impetuous, you know. You must have more regard for your own interests."

Alma was watching her narrowly. Beatrice met her glance with a cold smile.

"My conversation with Miss Lindrick yesterday has been repeated to Mr. Redburn," she said. "He did not know I was engaged to Godwin Earle, and the news has made him quite furious."

Alma coloured slightly.

"If I have made mischief, I am very sorry," she declared. "I did mention our conversation to papa, I admit."

"And I mentioned it to Redburn," confessed Colonel Lindrick frankly. "I did not know, however, that he was unacquainted with the fact of your engagement, Miss Ward. I, too, am sorry if I have made mischief."

"I have refused to give up Godwin Earle at Mr. Redburn's bidding," said Beatrice, in a steady voice. "I do not acknowledge his right to issue commands to me. And I have told him—plainly told him—that I wished he would find some other girl who would be more grateful for his benefits."

CHAPTER XX.

WHY MR. REDBURN WENT TO LONDON.

Alma looked at her father—he was looking at Beatrice, with an expression half of pity, half of admiration.

"You have been very, very unwise, Miss Ward," he said, shaking his head. "I am afraid Redburn will take you at your word."

"I am afraid he won't," she replied, with evident sincerity.

"Was he not very angry when you made that speech?" Alma asked.

"No; he suddenly cooled down, and told me he could not so easily resign his adopted daughter. Then he added something about having excited himself, and said he should not see me at luncheon."

There was a brief silence. Colonel Lindrick, who was really puzzled, handed Beatrice a cup of tea, with an absent air which was unusual in him.

"I can't imagine what can have made Redburn start off to town," he said gravely. "He has taken Blake with him, but he means to return to-night. It is enough to kill him."

"I thought he always told you all his plans," Beatrice remarked. "It seems strange that he has not confided in you to-day."

"Very strange. I hope he may not be going a little wrong in his head."

"It is my belief that he is," said Alma, pouring out tea for herself. "People with those violent tempers often drive themselves mad. He looked very odd, papa, when he asked you to order the carriage."

"He cut me short when I began to remonstrate," observed the Colonel, rising and slowly pacing the room. "He was evidently determined to carry out his whim, whatever it was."

After taking a few more turns, he quitted the room, and the two women were left to themselves. In Alma's mind there were no longer any bitter thoughts of Beatrice. Her jealousy had never been a very strong feeling, and it was now thoroughly overcome. This girl, she thought, was a romantic fool, who could only be made happy in one way.

"I wish I could make things pleasanter for you, my dear child," she said kindly. "But everything here seems to conspire against your happiness in the most extraordinary way. I really am afraid you will never get on with Mr. Redburn."

Beatrice, leaning back in her chair, gave a weary little sigh.

"I never shall," she answered simply. "He will have to let me take my own course. I am sure you mean to be kind, Miss Lindrick, but you cannot perhaps quite realise ——"

She paused and blushed.

"I do realise everything now," Alma said, with the utmost gentleness. "At first I own I did not. But I have thought the matter over, and I am sure you are quite right to listen to the voice of your own heart."

"It is kind of you to say this," Beatrice answered warmly.

"I am not naturally romantic," Alma went on. "And perhaps I am more swayed by worldly considerations than you could ever be. Yet I think it is very charming to see such devotion as yours. I hope Godwin will do his best to deserve it all; and, indeed, I dare say he will. You have my best wishes for your own happiness and his."

Then Beatrice did what any girl in such circumstances would have done. She got up and touched Alma's cheek with her lips.

Miss Lindrick was not, as we know, a woman of much heart. But the soft touch seemed to linger oddly on her cheek, after Beatrice had gone away to her own room.

She had not been over-kindly disposed to this fresh young girl who had consoled Godwin for the loss of his first love, and had been presented to everybody as Mr. Redburn's heiress. But it was plain that Beatrice did not glory in her triumphs. She simply wanted to love and be loved in peace.

"I do wish her well—I have not told any falsehoods," said Alma to herself. "She is so perfectly straightforward and natural that I believe I have a sort of liking for her. Poor silly child! Why is it that such a girl should worship such a man as Godwin Earle? I suppose they will marry somehow, either with or without money, and he will go calmly through life with her, accepting her devotion. And yet—it is quite possible that he will love her very dearly; better even than he ever loved me."

Then the Colonel re-entered the drawing-room, and his daughter began to speculate afresh about old Redburn's mysterious journey.

"He has no friends in town," said Colonel Lindrick. "This must be simply a mad freak. He has lived in a passion for days. I never saw such a violent man in my life. If he is not closely looked after he will go out of the world in one of these rages."

"The world is not much the better for his being in it," said Alma, who disliked all excitable people. "If he stays here long he will wear us all out."

"Oh, he won't live long enough for that," her father replied.

Mr. Redburn had given orders that no carriage was to be sent to the station. It was nine o'clock when Beatrice had gone upstairs, leaving Alma sitting in the drawing-room, and waiting anxiously for the expected traveller.

They had not long to wait. At half-past ten the sound of wheels was heard in the avenue, and Colonel Lindrick himself went to the hall-door to welcome his guest. It was a clear, soft night. The light from the entry streamed out through the open door, and shone on the muffled-up figure that slowly descended from the fly, with Blake's assistance. The Colonel met him with a cheery word of greeting, and led him at once to the drawing-room fire.

"I have stood the journey uncommonly well, Lindrick," said the old man, looking proudly round. "Where's Beatrice? Gone to her room? So much the better. I don't think she will try to set her will against mine again!"

"I'm sorry you found her so hard to manage," remarked the Colonel, in his quietest tone.

"And I am sorry, too," Alma added. "But really, Mr. Redburn, I am afraid she will never be persuaded to give him up."

"But what if he has consented to give her up? Ha, ha, ha!" laughed old Redburn, with a grating sound that made his hearers start. "I suppose you never thought of that, did you? Eh?"

He was not a pleasant sight to look upon just then, with his fiery old eyes shining out of his yellow face.

"No; we never thought of that," the Colonel admitted, rather blankly.

"Well, I did. I remembered that the scamp had good blood in his veins, and I made up my mind to appeal to his sense of honour. That Milton woman gave me his address. I went straight to his office in Aldersgate Street, and asked for a private interview."

"And you saw him?" the Colonel asked.

"I saw him, with good results. I reminded him that when Beatrice gave him her promise she was without prospects, almost alone in the world. I asked whether it was fair to entrap a young girl into an engagement with a man whose name was not unstained? I told him that her father would have required another kind of suitor for his child, and added that I was that father's representative. And, lastly, I declared that if he still held Beatrice to that childish promise of hers, it would cost her a handsome fortune. Not a shilling of mine, I said, should go to a husband who had a single spot upon his character."

Again he glanced round proudly, as if expecting applause. But his two listeners were utterly silent.

"He looked as if he had been shot," went on the old man remorselessly. "Turned a ghastly white, and could hardly get out his words. He said something about my unwarrantable language, but agreed to write to Beatrice this very night and set her free. That was all. When he had said that, he fairly turned me out of the room and shut the door in my face. But I had got all that I wanted. Ha, ha! I was not going to let the girl take her fate into her own hands, as she threatened to do to-day!"

"But how will she bear this?" asked the Colonel, speaking at last.

"Bear it? Didn't you say, yourself, that a girl of nineteen may change her mind twenty times a year? Her fancy for Earle was sheer obstinacy."

"You have taken a course which will make her more obstinate still. Believe me, Redburn, it would have been wiser to let that fancy die a natural death."

"Pooh! When she gets his letter it will be all over."

Colonel Lindrick shook his head.

"If you had not opposed her, she would probably have got tired of him. Time, and the free use of money, and a knowledge of the world, would have taught her to set a higher value on herself. But now——'

"So you think I have made a mistake, do you? What does Alma say?"

"Nothing," returned Alma, looking at the old man with a smile. "Only, I think you ought to get some rest. Doctor Bendall, you know, is coming to see you to-morrow. Do not let him find you looking any the worse for your journey."

Mr. Redburn was touched by her thoughtful care for his health. He said good-night to her with marked cordiality, and went away to his room, attended, as usual, by the faithful Blake.

"Well?" said the Colonel, looking ruefully at his daughter. "I don't think our chance is as good as it was. This is an unlucky move for us."

"Perhaps not," Alma answered. "My belief is that he will stir up Beatrice's undying hatred. I shall not be surprised if she refuses ever to see him again."

"But if Earle really does give her up ——"

"She will not be given up." Alma laughed a little. "Don't be astonished if she does not appear at breakfast to-morrow."

"What do you suppose she will do? By George, Alma, you don't fancy that she may put an end to herself?"

"No." Alma laughed again. "But I am firmly persuaded that she will run away."

CHAPTER XXI.

RUNNING AWAY.

BEATRICE slept soundly all night, and woke feeling refreshed and strengthened. The first post, she thought, would be sure to bring her a letter from Godwin. She would never repeat to him any of those cruel things that Mr. Redburn had said. But she must tell him frankly that she had tried to bear with the old man's domineering temper, and had failed. For a little while she lay watching the sunbeams sliding through the closed blinds, and scattering golden lights here and there. And then came the maid's morning knock at the door.

There was the expected letter in the salver. At the sight of the beloved handwriting her heart gave a throb of joy. The servant drew up the blinds, and let a flood of sunshine into the room. What a bright summer world was waiting for her out-of-doors to-day!

She opened her letter in a leisurely way, dallying with the pleasure that was in store for her. The address was not written quite so firmly as usual. Godwin's clear caligraphy had won a good deal of praise from Mr. Corder and the Miltons, and Beatrice was justly proud of it.

Before she had read two lines, the whole truth burst upon her mind in a sudden storm of anguish. As in a lightning flash, she saw the reason of Mr. Redburn's hurried journey to town. He had gone to see Godwin, and wring from him a promise to set her free. Free!

Were ever fetters better loved than hers? And could all the treasures in the world ever compensate her for those golden love-links that a cruel hand had broken?

To the very last day of her life she would never forget the agony of that morning hour. Godwin, when he wrote the letter, had been thinking more of his own pain than hers. He had been lashed and stung by the old man's insulting words, until the despair of the past had seized him in its grip again. What hope was there for him in the world? If ever he strove to enter the forbidden realm of happiness, there was a terrible "dweller on the threshold," pitiless, malignant, ready to drive him back.

Before Beatrice had got to the last of those miserable lines, her resolution was taken. Her whole nature was up in arms against the remorseless old tyrant who had spoiled the joy of her young life, She was too proud and too strong to be crushed by this sudden woe. Nay, she refused to bear it patiently, as many women of her years would have borne it. Haughty, vigorous, determined, she sprang up from her pillow, and began to make her preparations for hasty departure.

With marvellous speed, she collected her various belongings and heaped them into a capacious dress-basket. Only one thing was left out. Mr. Redburn had given her an Indian bracelet of massive gold; but no power on earth would have moved her to keep a gift of his. The bracelet, in its case, was placed upon the toilet-table, with a brief note addressed to the donor.

Another note was addressed to Miss Lindrick. In a few well-chosen words, Beatrice thanked Alma for her kindness, and apologised for this hasty leave-taking. In two lines she explained the reason of her strange flight. The little letter, although hurriedly written, was not incoherent, and was even penned with a steady hand.

Her box was locked; a direction-label gummed on the lid; and then she proceeded to put on her travelling costume. Giving one last look round the room, and taking up her hand-bag and sunshade, she went quietly downstairs without encountering anyone, and gained the hall in safety.

The house-door had already been unbolted by the servants, but not one of them was to be seen. A sweet, fresh breath of morning met her with a kiss of welcome as she stepped out into the open. The sound of her own footsteps on the gravelled drive made her once or twice believe that she heard someone coming; and she stopped to listen. But not a single human being was in sight.

The end of the avenue was gained at last, and she found herself outside the gates, and in the high road. It was a cloudless day; leaves were whispering in a soft breeze; birds sang joyously; the universal sweetness of fields and blossoms filled the air. She

hurried on, knowing nothing about the trains, and hoping that she should not have to wait long at the railway station. If she were detained, there was a fear that she might be pursued; perhaps by Colonel Lindrick, acting on behalf of his friend.

The loneliness of the sunlit road was unbroken. Only the boughs were moving, and the delicate leaf-sprays trembling in the hedges. She wished that she knew of some short cut, leading to the station; but, unacquainted as she was with the by-ways of Fairbridge, there was nothing to be done but to keep to the straight road, and march with all speed. Yet in this wild flight of hers, Fate seemed strangely to befriend her.

She had not gone more than three-quarters of a mile, when the sound of wheels, coming behind, set her heart beating with strong throbs. Had they already discovered her absence, and started in pursuit? If they had, she must be prepared for a scene; and again she wished passionately that she could have taken one of the narrow paths that ran across the meadows. The wheels came nearer, blending with the brisk trot of hoofs. She paused, and looked over her shoulder.

It was only a market-cart after all. The driver, a stout country girl, was sitting in front of a load of vegetables, crowned with a few nosegays of homely garden flowers. The sight of her rosy face was welcome enough to Beatrice, and inspired her with a sudden hope.

"Are you going to the railway station?" she asked, her clear voice ringing out distinctly in the morning stillness. "I will pay you anything you please if you will give me a lift."

The young woman stopped, and glanced at her doubtfully for a moment.

"It's a hard seat, and the cart jolts a good bit," she replied.

"But I don't mind jolting. I want to catch an early train."

"Jump up, then," returned the girl, good-naturedly. "If you don't like it I can easy set you down again." And Beatrice quickly climbed into the place by her side.

She would gladly have been spared the task of carrying on a conversation. But it was expecting too much to hope for silence. The girl talked freely about her personal concerns; explained that the load of garden stuff was to be sent to a greengrocer by the next up-train; and asked where her companion was going to?

"I am going to London," Beatrice answered.

"Then you'll just have time to take your ticket. Train's due at Fairbridge at twenty minutes past nine," said the damsel, shaking the reins as a hint to the stout cob to go faster. "Has your luggage gone on afore you?"

"It is to follow," replied Beatrice, "Are you sure we shall not miss the train?"

"Certain sure. Look right across that field, and you'll glimpse

the line. The station's over yonder, behind that clump of trees. When we turn the next corner we shall get there in a minute or two. But you're in a mighty hurry, ain't you?"

"Yes," said Beatrice. And then, thinking that she had given too curt an answer, she added—

"I have had news that makes me take a hasty journey."

"Bad news?" the girl inquired.

"Very bad news."

There was a silence, broken only by the jog-trot of the sturdy horse. A rush of honeysuckle perfume, sweet and overpowering, swept across their faces as they reached the corner. It came from a cottage, laden with creepers from basement to roof, and standing close to the roadside.

"That's where my sweetheart lives," said the rosy-cheeked maiden, glancing towards the door. An old woman, with a white frilled cap tied under her chin, appeared in the porch and nodded smilingly.

"And that's his granny," she added, returning the nod and smile. "Some day I'm going to be married, and we three shall live there together, as happy as birds in a nest."

Beatrice could not help sighing. She, too, could have been as happy as a bird in some humble cottage with Godwin. She had never pined for pomp and luxury. Her good health and simple habits made her indifferent to many of those things which Alma Lindrick prized. She would have faced even poverty bravely if she could have had her love near her heart. But it was wealth, accursed wealth, that had come between Godwin and herself, and separated them, perhaps, for ever. This ignorant country lass, with her open mind and free tongue, was more to be envied, she thought, than the woman who sat by her side.

She rallied herself, and spoke a few kind words to her companion as they approached the railway station. But when she asked what there was to pay, the girl cut her short with a laugh and a shake o head.

"Nothing more," she said. "You've wished me good luck, and that's payment enough for me."

The up-train was signalled. She had just time to take her ticket before it came thundering into the station. The door of a first-class carriage opened and shut: and a few moments later she was on her way home.

As the train rushed on, she caught a glimpse of the high road which she had traversed that morning. A dog-cart was fast approaching the corner where the honeysuckle cottage stood; and she was sure that the grey-haired man, seated beside the driver, was Colonel Lindrick. If it had not been for the rustic lass and her fast-trotting cob, Beatrice must have been overtaken.

In spite of a keen heart-ache, she smiled to think of Mr. Redburn's impotent rage. She had defied and escaped him.

It was not until Fairbridge had been left many miles behind, that Beatrice began to feel her strength was giving way. She remembered, with a sort of dull surprise, that she had not eaten anything since yesterday.

Her early cup of tea had been left untasted by the bedside. She had never once thought of food as she rose and dressed, and packed up her belongings in such wild haste. Nor had she felt the least pang of hunger when she was hurrying along the road to the railway-station. Anguish and anxiety had given her a fictitious strength. But now that the excitement which had sustained her was subsiding, she was conscious of utter exhaustion.

It was a fast train. Station after station was passed, and no one got into her compartment. She was glad to be alone; glad to let her tears flow freely. When she had read Godwin's letter for the first time she had not wept at all. But now, going over it carefully, word after word, she drank the bitter cup to the very dregs.

It seemed to her that it was indeed a final farewell. Mr. Redburn had inflicted a wound that no love-balm could heal. She meant to write to Godwin Earle that very day, and tell him of her flight from Oak Lodge. She would tell him, too, that she had given the old tyrant stripe for stripe, and flung back his benefits into his face. But could all this cure the deadly hurt that had been dealt to the man she loved?

No; the perfect peace and sweetness that he had found in her was utterly destroyed. Even if she won him back—and she did not think that she could—the memory of the old man's cruel words would always be as a cloud between them. Young as she was, she had studied Godwin's character attentively, and knew that there was something of Antonio in his nature. For the past year or two a quiet languor had been slowly creeping over his spirit; and he had held the world

> "A stage where every man must play a part,
> And his a sad one."

"Nothing but a miracle will ever set matters right!" she sobbed, with a fresh burst of tears. "Nothing but the clearing up of the mystery of the necklace. And it is absurd ever to dream of an explanation. Unless I can hold the hated thing in my hand and return it to its owner, there is no hope. Unless I can clear his name from this most undeserved calumny, he will never take me back to him again!"

A wiser, more worldly woman would have dried her eyes, remembered her beauty, and thought of fresh conquests. But poor Beatrice was neither worldly nor wise.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WIMPOLE STREET AGAIN.

It was a brilliant season; everybody worth mentioning was in town; the weather was all that could be desired. And yet Harriet Milton said to herself that her house seemed unaccountably dull and still.

She missed Beatrice. Although the girl had only been away so short a time, the Miltons were beginning to long foolishly for her return. Perhaps they had caught a little of her superstitious dread of the visit to Fairbridge. Perhaps they were perpetually haunted by their last glimpse of her sad face. Anyhow, there was an unuttered anxiety in the minds of husband and wife, and they had almost blamed themselves for letting her leave them.

The sudden appearance of Mr. Redburn at the office had alarmed Richard Milton. There had been something in the old man's manner, when he had asked for a private interview with Godwin, which had convinced Milton that troubles were apppoaching. Afterwards, he had seen old Redburn leave the place with an unpleasant smile puckering up his countenance. And he had said to himself that matters had gone wrong—terribly wrong.

Godwin Earle had told him nothing about that interview then. He had rushed past Richard with a haggard face, and left the office to return no more that day.

"I wish I knew what had passed between Redburn and Earle," Mr. Milton had said uneasily to his wife. "I don't like the look of things at all. The child's words are coming true; she said it would have been better if that old man had stayed in India!"

"Don't be fanciful, Richard," Harriet had replied, rather tartly. "I am so ridiculously unsettled in mind that a trifle frightens me. This is all owing to a warm spring. Our nerves are out of order."

"Mr. Redburn's call had nothing to do with our nerves," Mr. Milton responded gloomily. "I wonder whether there will be a letter from Beatrice to-morrow? She said something in her last about coming back."

The morrow came, but no letter arrived; and Mr. Milton went off to the City with a perturbed spirit.

As to Harriet, she made a poor breakfast, and then began to wander about the house like a restless ghost.

Her perambulations led her from the sitting-room into the flowery little yard; then into the sitting-room again; and finally out into the hall. She spoke snappishly to William; picked a living leaf from her pet geranium instead of a dead one; tripped over one of the mats, and nearly measured her length on the ground.

A strong arm caught her as she stumbled. Looking up, exceedingly ashamed of herself and her unwonted mood, she encountered the steadfast gaze of Mr. Vordenberg.

"You are not looking well this morning," he said, in a tone of kind concern.

"I am well, thank you," replied Harriet, speaking with the frankness which he always seemed to win from her. "But I am worried, absurdly worried, in fact, about Beatrice and her lover."

"What of them, Mrs. Milton?"

"I don't know. My husband and I are much perplexed. We think there has been something unpleasant between Mr. Redburn and Godwin Earle. That Mr. Redburn is a strange old man. He called here yesterday in a hurry, and asked for Godwin's address."

"And you gave it?"

"Yes. Then it seems he went straight to the office in Aldersgate Street, and requested a private interview with the poor fellow. What passed between them, my husband could not tell. Mr. Redburn departed, looking triumphant and extremely disagreeable. And soon afterwards Godwin rushed away without uttering a single word. It looks rather bad, we think; does it not?"

"Perhaps it does. Have you heard from Miss Ward this morning?"

"No; I wish we had. She might have given us an explanation. She, poor girl, was oddly unwilling to go to Fairbridge. But we tried to reason away her reluctance, of course. What else could we do? This Mr. Redburn was her father's greatest friend; and she is bound to consider his wishes, I suppose."

"She is not bound to let him meddle with her private affairs," said Mr. Vordenberg decidedly. "He has no right to come between her and Mr. Earle."

"Not the least right. But why should he want to come between them? It is true that Godwin is not rich, but he has excellent prospects. Mr. Corder seems to treat him as a son. They are not thinking of marrying yet. Beatrice is so young that they may well wait a year or two."

"But he is not very young," Vordenberg remarked thoughtfully. "And he looks as if he had had but little joy in his life. I have never seen a man with that expression who has not known sorrow."

"Oh, I believe he has suffered a great deal. There has been some misunderstanding with his friends; but I have not heard the story. Mr. Corder's son married a Miss Earle, and the Earles never forgave their sister for making such a match. I have always fancied they must be a hard-hearted set. They are living at Fairbridge."

"At Fairbridge! That is where Miss Ward is staying."

"Yes; she has already met them. But they do not know anything about the engagement. Our young people agreed to keep the matter a secret for the present. I think Godwin did not mean to make any declaration until his position was more assured. But love conquered prudence."

"That was not surprising," said Vordenberg, with one of his sad

smiles. "I have been glad to see her happiness," he added. "I never saw but one other girl become so radiant under love's influence. It is a pity to lose one gleam of such rare sunshine. I could never pardon anyone who had deliberately darkened her path."

"Nor I," responded Harriet, frowning thoughtfully. "The dear child is not rich, and I thought that old man's money might make her comfortable. But I will never counsel her to give up her lover for the sake of Mr. Redburn's gold. We were all going on very satisfactorily till he came here and disturbed our peace."

It was a quarter past eleven. Mrs. Milton, suddenly remembering that she had wasted a good deal of time that morning, went off to see after her neglected household duties. Vordenberg opened the hall door, and stepped out into the sunshine with his head full of Beatrice.

As he paced slowly through Cavendish Square, now cheerful with the foliage of the young summer, he recalled her face as it had looked when she had announced the fact of her engagement. Other fair faces were coming and going around him; but he only saw those intense blue eyes shyly gazing into his—only heard the timid voice that told him of her new-born happiness.

Poor child, had she not been afraid of being too happy? He remembered the little song that had saddened her, even in the first throbs of her new joy. Was it possible that those fears of hers were indeed prophetic of parting and pain? Ah, how gladly would he keep every shadow of sorrow away from her young life? What worlds he would have given for some mystic power of controlling her fate, and warding off any influence that was hostile to her peace!

He had promised to be her friend. He had been strangely impressed with the belief that his friendship would be precious to her in some time of need. But how could he work for her when she was miles away? How could he serve her without knowing what service was required of him? If only he had possessed the art of moving her mind at a distance he would have summoned her back at once. She was among strangers, people who could not care for her interests as he would care for them. They would give her no comfort if she suffered; no help if she wanted aid. Oh, that he could put forth some mesmeric force and call her back!

For nearly an hour he walked swiftly through the streets, seeing nothing but the pictures that rose before his mental sight. Then, almost mechanically, he turned his steps homeward again, and found himself approaching the house in Wimpole Street.

He was only a few paces from the door, when a cab stopped in front of the house. His heart gave a wild leap. Could his prayer be answered? Had she returned indeed? But no; there were no boxes; none of the usual signs of a returning traveller; it was only a momentary foolish hope that had so suddenly stirred him.

The driver jumped down and opened the cab-door. For an

instant Vordenberg believed that his brain was playing him a strange trick. This girl, who got out unsteadily, and stared round her with bewildered eyes, shining out of a death-pale face—this girl bore an unearthly resembrance to Beatrice! Was it her ghost? Or, if it was indeed her very self, what had they done to her?

As her gaze met his, a gleam of pleasure flashed across the poor white face; she staggered forward, catching at the arm he extended.

"Mr. Vordenberg," came in a whisper from the pallid lips.

"My child!" he said, supporting her tenderly to the house.

In the next moment the door was opened with his latch key, and he had placed her gently in a hall chair. Her bag was handed in by the cabman, the fare was paid, and the door closed.

Before Harriet could be summoned to her assistance, Beatrice was in a swoon. And Mr. Vordenberg, taking her up in his strong arms, carried her into the sitting-room and laid her on the sofa near the window. Then he withdrew, leaving the women to hover round the helpless girl, and watch eagerly for the first signs of returning life.

A flapping handkerchief, steeped in Eau de Cologne, was busy about her face when she came feebly back into the every-day world again. For a few seconds her dazed brain could not take in the familiar surroundings. She was afraid that this was Alma who was bathing her temples, and feared that her flight from Oak Lodge had been only a dream after all. And then, with a faint thrill of joy, she recognised Harriet's familiar features.

They lifted her up tenderly, as if she had been a child. Harriet left her for a moment, and came back with some brandy and water, which she held to her lips, for to her surprise Beatrice found that her hands were so unsteady that she could not hold the glass herself.

"You must not try to talk yet," said Mrs. Milton softly. "Heaven only knows how glad I am to have you here in safety."

And, fed by those gentle hands, watched by those kind eyes, the girl gradually revived, and lay languidly on the sofa while the sunny day went by. There was a blaze of scarlet geraniums set in the greenery of the little yard; the ivy trailing over the wall seemed fresh and flourishing. Beatrice rested on the couch in silence, and looked at it all.

Nothing seemed to interest her very much, as she lay there patiently and wearily. The pain of her own grief had dulled her spirit, and she could hardly gather strength to rejoice in the sense of security and rest. Vordenberg came many times to the door with whispered enquiries. Harriet sat near the sofa, and could scarcely be induced to leave her charge for a moment.

Just before Mr. Milton returned from the City, Beatrice began to show little signs of restlessness, and to start at the slightest noise. Harriet met a wistful look from the sad blue eyes, and ventured to ask a question at last.

"You are anxious, dear. Is there anything you want to know?"

"Yes: I want to know whether Mr. Milton has seen Godwin to-day?"

"You will know that very soon. But it is pretty certain that he has seen him."

There was a pause. Beatrice was gathering up her forces to speak again.

"Did he know that Godwin and Mr. Redburn met yesterday?" she asked, with a great effort.

"Yes; but he has not heard what passed between them. He could see that Godwin was much distressed."

The girl sighed heavily.

"I could tell what passed if I were strong enough," she said. "Harriet, you must read this letter, and it will explain a great deal. It came this morning. When I had read it, I felt that I could not stay another night at Oak Lodge, and so I ran away. Ah, was I not right to feel afraid of that cruel old man? He has destroyed my happiness."

"Not destroyed your happiness, only disturbed your peace," said Harriet, reassuringly, as she unfolded the letter. "My dear child, when Godwin knows you are here, nothing will keep him from your side."

"Pride will keep him," was the faint answer. "You will think differently, Harriet, when you have read that letter."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN EXILE'S STORY.

To Vordenberg that sunny afternoon was one of the longest that he had ever known. Once or twice, when he went to the door of Mrs. Milton's room, he had caught sight of Beatrice's white face as she lay upon the sofa. What would he not have given to have heard her speak? He was consumed with an intense longing to know the story of her sorrow. Until he did know it, he could do nothing; but if all were explained—if the history of the last few days was clearly set before him, he could surely find out some way of bringing back her happiness. A true love is always slow to believe in its inability to help the beloved. It feels strong enough to remove mountains and cut down forests—anything, to make the path easy for those dear feet.

And this love of Vordenberg's, coming late in that sad life of his, was, perhaps, as divine a feeling as poor humanity has ever known. It was the pure gold of affection, cleansed from all earthly dross of selfishness. If he could make the girl's heart beat joyously again he would rejoice, although every throb was for another. He asked for no reward, save the knowledge that she was blest.

The clocks were striking six when he heard them half-leading,

half-carrying her upstairs to her chamber. There was the sound of footsteps moving overhead; a window was closed, a door shut. He stayed quietly in his lonely room, listening for voices; but none came. This evening he longed especially for peace and solitude. But who does not know that such a longing is often the precursor of an invasion? Who has not settled himself for a quiet hour of work or thought, when—

> "Suddenly there came a tapping,
> As of someone gently rapping,
> Rapping at the chamber door."

The unwelcome tap came to Vordenberg, and wrung from him an angry murmur of impatience. There was no pause after the knock; no waiting for leave to enter; the door was flung open, and a wild figure rushed in. There could be no mistaking the fierce bright eyes, the shaggy hair and beard, the tall gaunt form of Michael Stavieski.

Why had he come this evening of all evenings in the year? Never had Vordenberg felt so inclined to hate the sight of this unfortunate friend of his youth as he did at that moment. As usual he would begin to harp on the old string, to recapitulate old wrongs, to lash himself into a state of impotent fury, until his listener's patience gave way. Their interview would end, as such interviews always did, with stern words from the one man, and eager apologies and self-reproaches from the other. Vordenberg was sick of it all—sick of this mad rage of patriotism that would stick at nothing in the pursuit of its impossible ends—sick of the long list of bygone injuries. Was there never to be a spell of forgetfulness and peace?

"Casimir," said the hollow voice, in a tone that would have made the flesh of an unaccustomed hearer creep. "Casimir, what a sight I have just seen! I have seen her with my own eyes; she was coming out of this house, this very house that shelters you, my friend!"

"Why should she not be coming out of it?" demanded Vordenberg, a little fretfully. "Do not make any noise, Michael; there is someone ill uptairs. Be as calm as you can."

"Calm!" repeated Stavieski, flinging up his arms. "Do you know what memories her face has recalled? Have you forgotten the fate of Wouriski's father, and of my own brother Paul? Do you not remember who came to old Wouriski's house, and won the confidence of the poor, blind women folk? Do you not ——"

"For heaven's sake, Michael, let us have no more of these old miseries to-night!" cried Vordenberg, in downright anger. "Are we to be eternally living in the past?"

"It would seem so, since faces from the past are eternally haunting us," said Stavieski. "You are not yourself to-night, Casimir. You do not give your heart to my words; you listen with your ears only."

"Michael, you are a fool! If you want money—you or Wouriski—there is no sacrifice that I would not make. But if I give you money, I ask you, in return, to respect my desire for peace. You come here, and find me weary, depressed—burdened with the weight of my own sorrows, and you persist in talking of old scenes and old wrongs that have been done with long ago. It is too much. I will not bear it. As to this mysterious woman you have met, I cannot even guess what her name is. I suppose she is some one who reminds you of one of your old enemies, and you are ready to murder her for the fancied resemblance."

"She is a spy!" hissed the Pole through his shut teeth.

"You see spies everywhere. The other day you took William for a spy—a boy who has not two ideas in his head! A little more of this absurdity and you will find your way to a lunatic asylum."

"Not yet—not yet. There is work to be done first."

"Sit down, Michael, and let me reason with you, my poor friend. I am sorry if I have spoken too harshly; but I am weary and sad to-night. Life is short, far too short to be spent in perpetual wrath and bitterness. You speak of work to be done; yes, there are works of mercy always waiting for our hands to do. There are the poor and needy to be helped and succoured. In helping them, are we not curing our own sick souls? Think of these things, Michael, and you will be a calmer and happier man."

Stavieski had seated himself, and was silent. His arms were folded; his head was sunk upon his breast; his whole attitude betokened the deepest dejection.

Vordenberg found his silence almost as irritating as his speech. He began to fidget in his arm-chair, inly wondering how long his visitor meant to sit there and worry him with that dumb show of misery? At last, unable to bear the hush any longer, he broke it by speaking in an aggrieved tone.

"What can I do for you, Michael?" he asked at last.

The bowed head was suddenly lifted; the eyes, full of a gloomy fire, met his eagerly.

"You can listen to me, Casimir. It is not a great thing that I require of you—only a little of your time and attention."

"Go on," said Vordenberg, resigning himself to listen with a heavy sigh. Stavieski began to brighten up at once. He straightened himself, fixed his glittering eye upon his victim, waved his hand, and plunged immediately into a long story.

"It was in the year 1863 that these things happened, Casimir—these things of which I must speak before I rest to-night. You were a fugitive then, my friend; of those whom you had loved so well, very few remained. Your property had all been taken from you and divided amongst your enemies. And he who had the lion's share, was the man who had once pretended to be your friend—the ever-accursed Gradizoff."

"Keep your hands still, Michael," pleaded the unfortunate auditor, with a suppressed groan. "And do not curse any more than you can help."

"We who stayed in Warsaw were thinking of you continually," Michael went on. "But we were watched always, watched so that we hardly dared to speak to each other in the streets. At that time Gradizoff had not returned to St. Petersberg; he was living still in the house that had belonged to that unfortunate Lorenski, who was exiled two years earlier. He had taken young Paulina Lorenski, as you know, to live with his wife; and in those days he was newly married and had no child. The girl seemed to live not unhappily in her strange home. She was allowed to go about freely here and there and see the people who had been her father's familiar friends. And so it came to pass that she was often at the house of old Wouriski."

Vordenberg was listening now in spite of himself. Michael, more self-controlled than usual, was telling his story fairly well.

"Old Wouriski lived, as you may remember, with his two daughters, Nathalie and Marie, and his son John. My brother Paul was paying court to Nathalie, and went every day to the house. I did not go so often; my mind was wholly occupied with our great schemes. Even then, under the very eyes of the Muscovites, we were working—working always; and we would not give up our hope. And John Wouriski was one of our boldest spirits, ever cogitating and planning; we put much trust in him and in his active brain. But there came to us, from a sure source, the news that John was about to be arrested; and he fled—there was nothing to be done but to fly."

"Poor John," Vordenberg softly murmured.

"Things went on just in the same way with the Wouriski household after he was gone. We missed him, but we dared not speak much of our absent friends. We were always silent about our beloved ones at a distance in those days. Paul still faithfully courted Nathalie; little Marie was the inseparable companion of young Paulina Lorenski, who came daily to complain of the Countess Gradizoff's temper. We all pitied the girl whose father was wearing out his weary life in Siberia. There was not one of us, who would not have given his right hand for the brave Lorenski's child."

"It is true, Michael; I believe you."

"Paulina was not pretty in those days; she had not the proverbial beauty of our Polish women. But her dark eyes were large and soft, and she was gentle, and won our hearts by her submissive sadness. She was young and weak, and had not the strength to struggle, she said. But her heart was full of wrath against those who had taken away her father; and she would often ask the Wouriski girls whether the Poles had given up all hope? Paul told everything to Nathalie—alas! Casimir, it is a dangerous thing for a patriot to trust in a woman! and Nathalie had few secrets from Marie and Paulina. And so the end came."

"A bitter end, indeed," said Vordenberg, with a deep sigh.

"Even when they arrested old Wouriski and Paul—my poor, foolish Paul—we did not at first suspect the traitress. But there were plain proofs; a letter had been stolen from Nathalie by Paulina's own hand—suspicions became certainties. I was absent from Warsaw when the arrests took place; and when I heard of them, I fled, just as you and John Wouriski had fled before me. There is very little more to tell, my friend. You know how the old man and the young one were sent on the long, weary way that so many brave men have trodden. You know that old Wouriski died upon the journey. But as to Paul, I know not whether he is living or dead."

"My poor Michael, you have suffered bitterly," said Vordenberg, sadly. "But this woman who played the spy—did you not once tell me that John Wouriski saw her in Paris?"

"Yes; she was in Paris a short time ago. After old Wouriski and Paul were sent to their doom, the Gradizoffs went back to St. Petersburg, taking Paulina Lorenski with them. We do not know whether Paulina lived with them always; we have reason to believe that Gradizoff sent her here and there, doing that evil work in which she had already succeeded so well. He gave her money; she must have had savings when he died."

"It is too horrible to think of."

"After his death, which happened about four years ago, she came to England with the widowed Countess and her daughter. But the life did not suit her, and she would not endure it long. She applied to those who were acquainted with the services she had rendered; they listened to her, and sent her to Paris. And there she bloomed out into a new life."

"The life of an adventuress?"

"Even so. Paulina had always a mania for jewels; even as a child she could never resist anything that glittered and shone. Mephistophiles might have won her, easily enough, with that casket which poor Marguerite despised! She was handsomer as a woman than she ever had been as a girl. There was a foolish old man named Valerot, who had made his fortune by speculating on the Bourse. He saw her, loved her, in his fashion, well enough to marry her; and became insane a few months after his marriage. Then—then——"

Michael had started up from his seat, and was pacing the room wildly, swinging his arms in the old excited way which Vordenberg knew so well. His eyes glared fearfully; his face had changed from white to dark-red; his rising fury almost choked him.

"Then, Casimir, she came *here*. By all the saints I swear that these eyes have looked upon her evil face to-night! Listen—listen, my friend. I will govern myself, I will speak so calmly that you shall not know it is your poor Michael who speaks!"

He paused; then paced the floor again with measured strides, and spoke in a quieter voice.

"We share the same room, Wouriski and I. There is nothing left to us but our friendship, and the ties that bind us to the past. This has been a bright day; it made us think of days in Poland, long ago, when it was summer, and the blood of youth coursed freely through our veins. We had been working hard for hours—toiling for our daily bread, as exiles have to toil—the evening came, and we said: 'Let us walk near the house where Casimir lives, and give him our blessing; the blessing of those whom he has succoured in their time of need.'"

His tone had become gentle and low; there was a softer light in his eyes. Vordenberg passed his hand across his face. This gratitude—this gentleness in one so wild—touched him more than words could express.

"There was a carriage standing before the house. The door opened, and a woman came forth. At the sight of her, I thought that Wouriski had become mad. He seized my arm, and hissed her name into my ear; and we looked at her—looked at her, as if our eyes could never have enough of her face. She was beautiful, with a girlish, innocent beauty, so that no one could guess that she was more than thirty years old. Her hair, no longer dark brown, was cropped close to her head, and shone like red gold. A soft white shawl was wrapped round her shoulders, but not so closely that we could not catch the shine of the gems on her neck and arms. Ah, Casimir, it was a sight that we could hardly see and live!"

Slowly, while Stavieski was speaking, there had dawned on Vordenberg's mind a vague remembrance of the woman he described. He saw a vision of a peach-like face, round and soft as a child's—of glorious dark eyes—of short-cut auburn hair. He had never thought of asking anyone to tell him this woman's name. His heart was so full of Beatrice, and his love for her was so mysteriously blended with the love of his lost Sofie, that he had no thoughts to spare for others.

Never before had he felt so much inclined to make allowances for this excitable Michael, who had so often bored him with his wild suspicions and impossible schemes of victory and vengeance.

And yet, how necessary it was to soothe the poor Pole, smarting under an internal sense of wrongs that could never be set right on earth! Vordenberg, too, rose in his turn, and put his arm round Michael's shoulders, as he had often done when they were boys together.

"Michael, my dear old friend," he said kindly, "do not think that I cannot realise what it cost you to see her face! I am a dreamer, and I take little heed of those who are under this roof—save one. Women go and come, like shadows to me. But, my brother, you must avoid this woman; you must not come again while she is here." Stavieski uttered a low cry of pain.

"You cannot mean this, Casimir," he said piteously. "She has robbed me of Paul, already—must she take you from me also?

Must I be deprived of the only consolation left me on earth? Think—I lead a hard life; when I come into this room I breathe a new air; I live my old happy days over again. You are changed, Casimir; but you do not show any of the degrading signs of poverty. You are a type of the interesting exile, who would be petted and caressed in any society—whose sorrow has merely added the charm of melancholy to his handsome face. You have been well compared to Chopin—the refined, spiritual Polish gentleman, who moved in aristocratic circles and fascinated friends and foes. There is a poetic aroma about your music, and all that you do and say. But I—I have none of these attractions. Banish me from this house, deny me the consolation of your presence, and what remains to me?"

An intense pity filled Vordenberg's soul, and blinded him, at that moment, to the real danger of letting his old friend run the risk of again meeting Madame Valerot.

Anything was better than inflicting another wound on that poor scarred heart.

"Well, well, do not distress yourself," he answered soothingly. "But you must avoid her, Michael; you must never linger near her door a moment. And do not let her catch sight of your face. If she recognised you, she would leave this house at once. Moreover she might have you watched; one cannot tell what power she has. Me she never knew; but you she saw often in the old days."

"Not as often as she saw poor Paul! Yes, Casimir, I will promise to be cautious. As to Wouriski, he is always on his guard. Good-night, my best friend; I can leave you now that I have unburdened my mind. I know you wish to be alone."

He left the room, gently and quietly; and Vordenberg went back to his solitary musings.

The story which Michael had just told him had awakened every sleeping memory of the past. He recalled the old days, and the old companions, whose faces were beginning to fade slowly out of his recollection. But there was one face, with clear, true eyes, and haughty features, that rose before him distinctly in the evening dusk. He remembered the open hand, the warm heart, the high courage that no trials could quell—and sighed bitterly over the cruel fate of Demetrius Lorenski.

But although the face of the father came before him clearly enough, he could remember nothing of the young daughter who had found a shelter with Gradizoff. This woman who lived downstairs, might perhaps bear some resemblance to the man he had known so well in former times. If the story which Michael had related were quite true (and he was certain that his poor friend had not lied), then indeed it was well for the proud Lorenski to be in ignorance of the fate of his child. Alas! no one knew whether the Siberian exile were living or dead. If he were living he must be an old man now. It was far more probable that he had ceased to suffer years ago.

He did not doubt the authenticity of any information which Wouriski had obtained. Poor and miserable as he was, Wouriski had his secret informants, and they were not often deceived. There were times when he had thought uneasily about the close companionship of two such ill-used and passionate men as Wouriski and Stavieski. And yet, what harm could they do? They were so poor, so broken, so powerless! And he had much faith in his own influence over those stormy spirits, and believed that he could soothe them into comparative patience and peace.

The evening was rapidly wearing away; night was coming on. He rose and paced the dim room, quietly, and not with Michael's heavy strides. The events of this day had made him restless. He had a strange presentiment that something more important—more startling than anything which had happened yet—was still to come.

He had given so few thoughts to his fair fellow-lodger that he did not even know whether she kept late hours. Michael had seen her going out in evening dress; at what time would she be likely to return? He was possessed with a strong desire to see her face that very night.

The hours went by. Presently William came in to set a lighted lamp upon the table and draw down the blinds. The house was very quiet; Mrs. Milton had gone upstairs to Beatrice, and intended to pass the night on a sofa in the girl's room. What a long, tedious night it would be to that weary young heart, crushed under its heavy load of anguish! To Vordenberg, who had suffered so much, the face of sorrow was as familiar as that of an old friend. But to Beatrice, young, lovely, untried by the sharpest kind of anguish, this grief was terribly new and strange.

He got some books from his shelves; and tried to soothe himself with some favourite poems. But the sweetest verses, new or old, had no charm for him to-night. Why did poets all harp so cruelly on the old strings? Love, Change, Death—were there no other themes? He closed the volume with a sigh of disgust, and took up the latest novel from Mudie's.

But the novelist was as melancholy as the poet. It seemed as if the whole world had only one story to tell, a story of blossoms blighted in their first flush, of a sun that went down while it was yet day. Vordenberg thought of the girl upstairs, and flung the novel from him.

Seized with a sudden longing for the breath of the summer night, he lifted the sash, and leaned out. The air was balmy and still. The scent of the flowers from Madame Valerot's balconies, floated up sweetly, and refreshed him unawares. Cabs and carriages were rattling up and down the street; presently a brougham came driving up to the house. Vordenberg drew in his head, and quickly pulled the blind down again.

It was the work of a few seconds to put on a light overcoat, wrap a silk muffler round his neck, hiding the lower part of the face, and quietly leave the room. He went swiftly and noiselessly downstairs —so swiftly and noiselessly that he almost came into collision with a lady who was just coming up.

Mrs. Milton's house was always well lighted, and the encounter took place under a gas-lamp which illumined the space at the bottom of the stairs. Vordenberg, as he stepped aside and murmured an apology, had a full and distinct view of Madame Valerot.

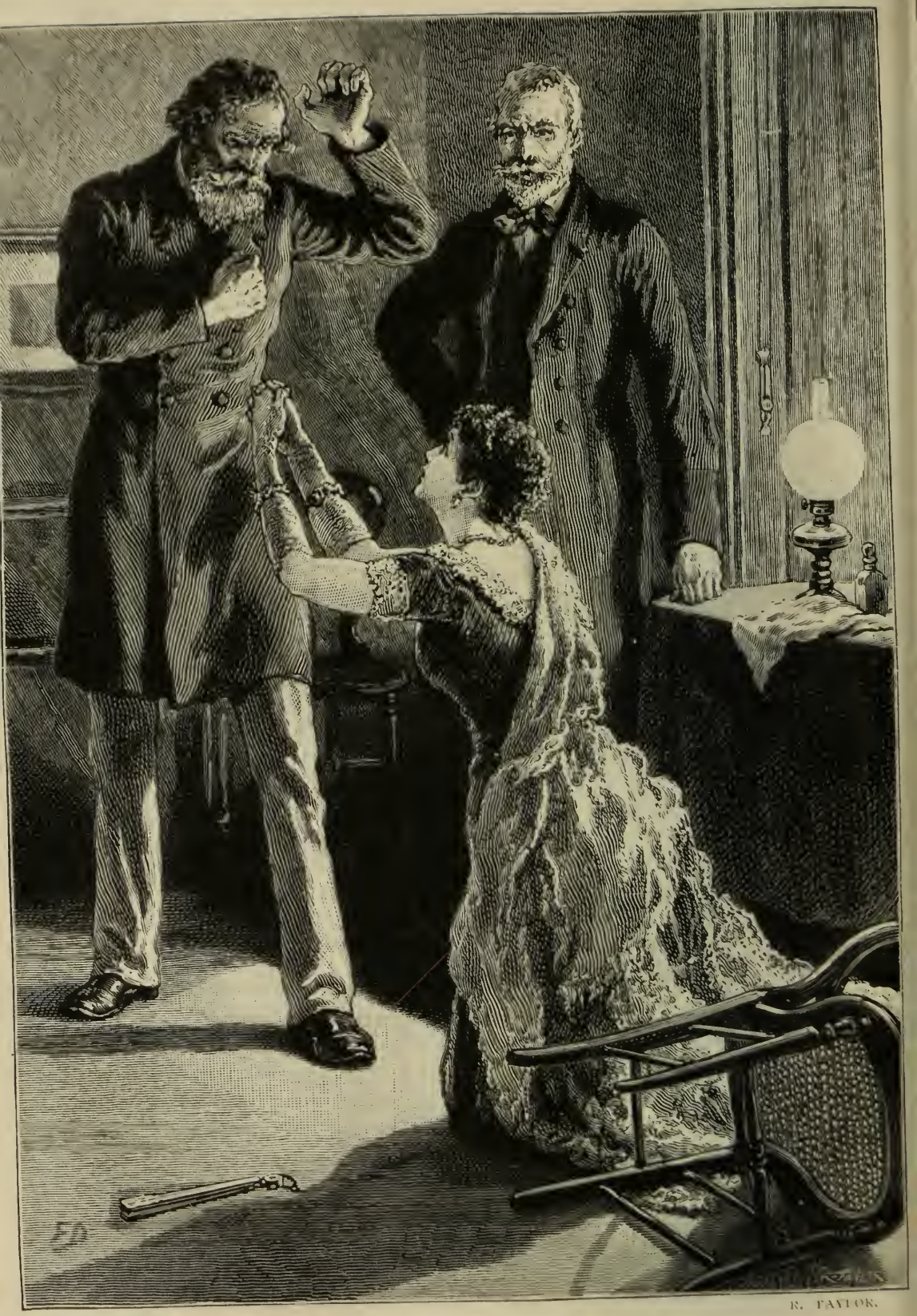
Paulina Valerot was one of those women who defy all analysis. There were moments in her life when she looked almost as old as she really was. But to-night she had enjoyed herself, and her beautiful brown eyes were still radiant with the light of pleasure. Her soft round cheeks were flushed; a fleecy white shawl was folded so carelessly over the full bust that one could see the blaze of gems upon her neck. Bracelets were flashing on her plump white arms; she wore a pale blue satin gown, that glistened in the gaslight. The childish head, with the short auburn hair, was uncovered; the dark eyes looked up at Vordenberg with a startled, innocent glance.

She went her way up to her rooms, and he passed out into the street, to wander for a little while under the light of the stars. So that woman—so brilliant, so sumptuous—was little Paulina Lorenski, whose father (if he were still alive) was wearing out his days in the Siberian mines. It was not pleasant to think of her, with all those gems on her neck and wrists. He would have been better pleased to have seen a wimple on the bright head, and a crucifix upon her breast. Do men ever think of the price that women pay for jewels? Some of them do; and (even while they bestow the baubles with a lavish hand) they feel that souls are worth more than diamonds.

Walking slowly under those quiet stars, Vordenberg thought of the two girls who were fated to be the chosen loves of his life. One of them, torn suddenly from earth and bliss, had been a saint in heaven for many a year; and the other, lying up there, in that room where a light was burning, was breaking her heart for the sake of another man. Yet far better was such a lot as theirs than that of the woman he had just seen. He turned back to the house again with a bitter little laugh; and a stray verse from Owen Meredith came drifting into his head as he opened the door:—

> "Could we find out her heart through that velvet and lace:
> Can it beat without rumpling her sumptuous dress?
> She will show us her shoulder, her bosom, her face;
> But what the heart's like, we must guess."

(To be continued.)



FRANK DADD. R. TAYLOR.

"IT IS NOT POSSIBLE THAT YOU MEAN TO KILL ME!"

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1887.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

By Sarah Doudney.

CHAPTER XXIV.

QUIET DAYS.

THE morning came, and Beatrice tried to get up, and begin her old life at home.

But this was soon found to be impossible; young and healthy as she was, her strength was not equal to the heavy demands which had been made upon it. The shock of Godwin's letter; the hurried journey; the long fast; all these things had done their work. Harriet was firm, and would not let her leave her bed all day.

The first post brought a letter from Alma Lindrick, full of sympathy and ladylike distress. As to Mr. Redburn, he was, of course, in a violent state of consternation and rage. He had not been in the least prepared for Beatrice's course of conduct, although (as Alma took care to say) it was a perfectly natural course, considering the circumstances. The Lindricks were not surprised; they could not possibly be surprised at Miss Ward's indignation. They feared that Mr. Redburn's health would suffer through this unfortunate affair; and could only wish that he had asked their advice before seeking that interview with Godwin Earle.

The day went on. Afternoon came, and Mr. Milton came home from the City with a note in his pocket. It was only a brief note, but when Beatrice had read it, she was not, perhaps, quite so intensely miserable as she had been before.

"My own darling," it ran.—"You saved my life, and I have darkened yours. I can find no words to tell you how I suffer. You are ill, they say; and your illness is caused by me. Would that I could come and comfort you! But, stained and dishonoured as I am, what can I do? My heart is yours only, for ever and ever. G. E."

A low sob brought Harriet to the girl's side. With trembling fingers, Beatrice put the note into her friend's hand. Mrs. Milton read it with tears that she did not attempt to hide.

"Dear child," she said, "my heart aches for you both. He has told my husband everything. We know what the cruel accusation is, but Mr. Corder is full of hope."

"How can he hope? You know the mystery is impenetrable."

"He refuses to believe that it is impenetrable. Take courage, Beatrice; believe that the cloud will show its silver lining by-and-by. Meanwhile you must rest, and try not to think of anything at all."

The girl smiled faintly at this impossible injunction, and sank back on the pillow, tightly clasping the note in her feeble hands. She could not be as hopeful as they were; but they believed in Godwin's innocence, and that alone was a great comfort.

Many and many a weary hour went by in that room at the top of the house. The sound of wheels in the street below was softened; up here there was a quiet peace. The evening was the best time, when yellow lights fell softly on the walls, and the golden calm of the sunset rested on Beatrice's aching heart. She did not ask her nurse many questions. Nothing was left to her but patience.

"But the love is mine still," she thought. "And love is the best thing that life holds. I must wait for more light."

Harriet had not sent for a doctor; she had perfect faith in her own good nursing and strong beef-tea. Vordenberg sent dainties and flowers. Mr. Corder came often to the house with hot-house fruit and guava jelly, until the very mention of his name was associated with things good to eat. Mrs. Milton did not dare to tell her charge how often someone else came. She was afraid of being asked how he looked; and the task of describing that worn, anxious face, and those hollow eyes, was quite beyond her.

If Madame Valerot knew anything about Miss Ward's illness, it did not affect her in the least. She was entirely occupied with her own concerns and seemed to bloom more brightly as the summer days went on.

One evening, when she was sweeping out of the house to a carriage, she encountered Godwin Earle, who had come to make enquiries. At the sight of him, for reasons best known to herself, her heart began to throb violently; and she snatched up a corner of her soft white shawl, and held it to her face. A needless precaution. Godwin was far too miserable to give her a glance or a thought.

Safe in the carriage, she shrugged her shoulders at his haggard face, and bestowed a malediction upon him for crossing her path, and giving her a fright.

"I do not like melancholy people," she thought, "and it is always hateful to be haunted by ghosts that belong to the past."

She did not know that two other ghosts—ghosts with menacing eyes—were watching her as she drove through the streets. She had no idea that she was quietly followed sometimes when she went to theatres and dinners and balls. Life was very pleasant to her in

these days; she had money to spend and jewels to wear; and what could a woman want more?

As to Vordenberg, he, too, had few thoughts to bestow on the woman with the short auburn hair and dark eyes. His mind was eternally occupied with Beatrice and her sorrow. What that sorrow was he had not yet found out. He must wait patiently until he could hear her story from her own lips. And then—then, surely, he might find a way of proving his devotion.

Since the evening of their last long talk, he had seen nothing of Michael. The poor fellow had divined, perhaps, that his friend was engrossed with matters that did not concern him in the least. At their last meeting Casimir had allowed his impatience to be plainly seen; and although he had atoned for hasty words by plenty of kind ones, their memory lingered in the heart of Stavieski.

For nearly a fortnight Beatrice remained, a petted prisoner, in the room at the top of the house.

It was a great event when Harriet brought her downstairs, and once more established her on the sofa near the French window. They had made a festival of her coming down. The pretty sitting-room looked as if it were let for a flower show; such wonderful masses of roses, geraniums and azaleas, had seldom gladdened Beatrice's eyes before. Even the yard was blooming anew with fresh plants in pots and stands, and the ivy shone as if every leaf had been specially burnished for this joyful occasion.

Weak as she still was, the girl took in all her pleasant surroundings with a quiet thankfulness. She was no longer as unhappy as she had been when she had first returned to Wimpole Street; but there was still the pain of a deep yearning in her heart.

She missed Godwin more than any words could tell. They had been so constantly together before her banishment to Fairbridge. The long, quiet evenings, the bright Sunday walks, the endless interchange of thoughts, all had tended to their mutual good and happiness.

And now they were severed; each was treading a lonely path; each was wearying for the "touch of a vanished hand"; each was realising what it was to walk desolate day by day. Beatrice, lying quietly on her sofa, with the flowers all round her, used to think a great deal about the unsuspected love-tragedies that are being daily enacted everywhere in the world.

In these hours, tranquil, but sad beyond expression, the sorrow of life itself seemed to overwhelm her spirit. How few ever walk side by side, for long years, with the chosen companion of the soul! How few enjoy the simple, fresh, old-world love of Adam and Eve in their Eden, untroubled by prudent counsellors and meddling busy-bodies! Some one steps in, ruthlessly enough, and severs the clasped hands by main force. Or someone else, with the serpent's own fiendish wisdom, whispers soft mischief into the ears that are drinking

in love's vows. Anyway, the hands are parted; what matters how it is done?

A letter had come from Mr. Redburn, addressed, not to Beatrice herself, but to Mrs. Milton.

It was a furious, unreasonable letter, written in a shaky hand, declaring that Harriet had exceeded her prerogative in taking full charge of the girl, and sanctioning her engagement to a scoundrel! If the writer had not been quite knocked up by this miserable affair, and by the shock of Beatrice's sudden flight, he would have come straight to Wimpole Street, and insisted on seeing his old friend's daughter and bringing her to reason.

Mrs. Milton wrote back with quiet dignity. She enclosed a copy of a letter written by Beatrice's grandfather, a week or two before his death. In that letter old Mr. Ward entreated her to be a mother to the girl he was about to leave alone in the world; and thanked her for all the love with which she had watched over his grand-daughter from childhood. With respect to Godwin Earle, Mrs. Milton simply expressed her perfect confidence in his innocence, and her hope that the mischief done by Mr. Redburn might be speedily undone. Beatrice, she added, was far too unwell to see visitors; therefore if Mr. Redburn came up to town it would be impossible for him to have an interview with the poor, suffering child.

The old coffee-planter wrote a second time, and was so immoderate in his abuse that Mr. Milton replied, saying that the correspondence must cease. But old Redburn's abusive letter did some good. Richard Milton carried it to Godwin Earle, and asked him whether anything said by such an unreasonable man were worthy of notice. And Godwin admitted that the bad opinion of such a person was not likely to hurt anyone very much.

"But," he added sadly, "on one point he is right, after all. He says that if I could not prove my innocence, I ought at any rate to have made good the Countess Gradizoff's loss, before proposing to Beatrice."

"He is an old ass," replied Richard Milton, angrily; "and I will never admit he is right about anything."

Two days went by. And on the evening of the third day, Vordenberg began to wonder when he might seek that longed-for interview with Beatrice.

Harriet did not speak very favourably of the girl's health. Her vitality seemed to be ebbing; she was too meek—too patient. The natural Beatrice had been impetuous, and often a little self-willed; but this quiet invalid appeared to have no will left. They had not admitted any visitor, nor had she asked to see anyone. It was obvious that she was too much shattered still to bear the least excitement. There was the sense of kindness waiting for her by-and-by; of friends biding their time to give her comfort; but she did not call them yet.

It was still early in the evening; Vordenberg, sitting in his usual place by the window, had taken up his guitar and struck a chord now and then. The sky was beautiful with the intense calm of June; a few thin white clouds sailed aloft; the air was sweet and still. He leaned back in his chair and began softly singing an old song.

The first verse was scarcely ended, when the door opened, and Michael Stavieski—more gaunt and haggard than ever—came slowly into the room. His entrance was so quiet, and his manner so gentle, that Vordenberg looked up at him in surprise. What new spirit had taken possession of the man, and made him so subdued in voice and bearing? Michael's first words answered the question.

"Ah, Casimir, that is one of our Polish songs! Paul used to sing it to Nathalie," he said, with glistening eyes. "His voice was something like yours; but not, I think, so rich and sweet. Go on, my friend; let me hear it to the very end."

Glad to humour him, and give pleasure to the poor worn heart, Vordenberg went on singing. And Michael, sitting near him quietly, drank in every note with silent rapture. When the song was done, he rose with a deep sigh.

"Does Paul ever sing now, I wonder?" he said, dreamily. "Ah, no; if he is still living, he has no voice left and no heart for music. Torn from home and hope and love in the very flower of his youth—chained and driven along the weary road where so many fall by the way.—Poor Paul!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE STOLEN NOTE.

Stavieski did not sit down again. He stood for an instant looking into space, then held out his hand, saying quietly:

"Adieu, my friend."

Vordenberg, still in surprise, pressed the strong bony hand, and let him go his way. He was used to Michael's varying moods; but this strange quietness, produced, perhaps, by the music, was not usual; and he remembered it long afterwards. Even then, when the door was shut, and the sound of retreating steps was slowly dying away, he felt a sudden impulse to rise and recall his old companion. But he did not do it. He sat, with the guitar resting on his knee, looking up at the evening sky and letting his thoughts stray back again to Beatrice.

With the notes of that old song still echoing through his brain, Stavieski descended the stairs. The drawing-room door stood open; and as he approached that room he paused, forgetful for the moment of his promise to Vordenberg.

The house was very quiet at that hour. There was neither steps nor voices to be heard, and the first golden lights of sunset were shining

in through Madame Valerot's windows. What was there to prevent him from entering that room of hers? Already his promise to his friend had passed completely out of his mind. He lingered a second or two on the threshold, consumed with an intense curiosity and longing to go in.

It was not likely that a man of his unsettled and stormy temperament would resist such a temptation, coming, as it did, at a time when there was small risk of discovery. He did not resist it, but yielded without a struggle.

He entered, silently treading on the heavy carpet. The place was full of rich evening light, and sweet with the fragrant breath of many flowers. There was a sense of utter comfort and luxury here: satin cushions were heaped upon the couch; over the back of a chair hung an open cloak of golden brocade, edged with dark fur; on an ottoman lay a fan of yellow feathers.

Upon a round table in the middle of the room there was a large circular glass dish of flowers, with a lily-shaped vase springing out of the centre. It was bordered with velvety pointed leaves and sprays of maidenhair—a meet setting for stephanotis and golden cineraria, scarlet geranium and crimson and yellow roses. In the tall vase were two white camellias with their dark-green foliage.

The gaunt, shabby man (looking oddly out of place in this luxurious room) drew a step nearer to the table and looked at the flowers. He had been fond of flowers once. There came to him a vague memory of a time when he had offered them, as fitting gifts, to fair women. With a trembling hand he touched, first a spray of fern, and then a delicate cambric handkerchief that had been left there.

When he moved the handkerchief, he saw that something was lying under it. Only an open note, written by a woman's hand.

He stood still, looking round him at the rich cushions and draperies, and all the traces of a luxurious taste and an easy life. And then he thought of old Wouriski, dying of exhaustion on the long road to Siberia—of Paul, in his perpetual servitude in the mines—of the two lone women, growing old in poverty, and still mourning for a father and a lover.

The expression of that haggard face was not good to see just then. There was no Vordenberg at hand to utter soothing words. The wild heart in Michael's bosom cried out against all this wealth and luxury. The betrayer lived and prospered and flourished; her victims told no tales; and found no avengers.

He glanced down at the note, lying near the embroidered handkerchief. Time was precious; already he fancied that there were sounds in the rooms below. Snatching up the letter, he put it into his breast, and then left the room, and passed out of the house.

Out in the open air he walked briskly, until he had gained a quiet street where there was little traffic. Then he drew the crumpled

paper out of his bosom and read the lines, written in a clear, lady-like hand.

DEAREST PAULINE.—I will send a carriage for you at eight on Sunday evening. Our friend is growing impatient for another meeting. Do not fail me.—Your affectionate,

18, Torrington Square. JULIA DE BUSIGNY.

That was all; but when Michael had read those few words, a strange smile of triumph flitted across his features. An idea had flashed suddenly into that wild brain of his.

It was a brilliant thought, he said exultingly to himself; only it would require great care and skill if it were to be worked out. And it could not be worked out unless Wouriski consented to act with him. But he had few doubts about Wouriski.

As he walked swiftly back to the poor lodging he shared with his brother-in-exile, there was a fierce light in his eyes and his lips moved unconsciously. But shabby men with wild faces and shaggy beards are common in London streets; and no one paid any heed to Michael, striding along and muttering as he went. Yet none of the penny dreadfuls in the newsvendors' shops contained anything more strange and romantic than the plans that were seething in his brain.

Along Oxford Street he went, still busy with his grand scheme—past gay shops and gayer people—until he came to Wardour Street, and then quickened his pace, impatient to reach his destination.

He had to go a long way down the street, before he paused at last at the door of one of the darkest, shabbiest shops that were to be found in that dingy neighbourhood. It was a shop that made the meanest and the most sordid pretence of displaying curiosities in its window: the smartest things there being a pair of old epaulettes and a few handfuls of gilt buttons. Any other treasures that the establishment contained were jealously hidden from the eyes of the public; and the wonder was, not only how the proprietor lived, but what he could possibly have to sell.

Nevertheless, he did live; and his wife, a wizened, wiry woman of uncertain age, devoted her attention chiefly to the care of her lodgers.

There were, however, only three lodgers in the house; and one of them never came home till night. The two Poles occupied the best rooms, which were over the shop, and the nocturnal lodger slept above them. The landlord and landlady lived, moved and had their being entirely on the ground floor, where they had a kitchen and a sort of cupboard which answered the purpose of a place to sleep in.

Old Gregg was in his shop when Stavieski came in; but he never troubled himself even to glance at the tall man who went quickly past his heaps of rubbish and lumber. If Gregg had been closely

questioned as to his opinion of foreigners, he would have replied that they were "mostly fools." The two lean men who rented his parlours did not interest him in the least. Nor was his wife more curious about the history of the pair of friends, who never complained of her domestic arrangements, or asked for any increase of comfort. They paid their way and were easily pleased, and that was quite enough for such an apathetic couple as the Greggs.

A short flight of stairs led up to Stavieski's room. Two or three eager strides brought him to his own door; and he burst in suddenly upon a solitary man, poring over some papers which were scattered about upon the table.

Like his friend, John Wouriski was tall and thin; but he had been, in better days, a handsomer man than Stavieski. His hair and beard were quite white; making all the more conspicuous the intense darkness of the eyes, which shone at times with almost a lurid splendour. It was the wild light in the eyes that created a certain resemblance between two men who were not otherwise alike in feature. And Wouriski, shabby as he was, retained about him an air of distinction which might have attracted the notice of people more observant than the Greggs.

He looked up wearily as his companion entered. But at Michael's first words the dark eyes seemed to flash fire. He rose from his seat at the table, and stood with his back to the window, gazing intently into his friend's face.

"In our power, Michael! Paulina Lorenski in our power!" he said incredulously. "Why do you say such things? It cannot be."

"Wait till I have told you my plan," returned Stavieski, breathing hard. "Listen. We are always safe here while we talk in our own language, and speak in quiet tones. We are good lodgers—you and I—we have earned the confidence of our landlord, have we not? Nevertheless, when we bring a traitress to this house, it is as well that they should be out of the way. And they will be out of the way on Sunday evening."

"You are mad, Michael; we are both mad. We have watched the woman until the very thought of her begins to turn the brain. Have you seen her to-day?"

"I have not seen her, Wouriski; but I have been into her room. Such a room, my friend! Full of flowers and silken cushions and luxuries! And when I stood on the soft carpet, and saw all her pretty trifles scattered about me, I wondered how Paul was faring in the mines! Ay, as I stood there, it seemed as if your father rose up before me: I could have sworn that I saw him, bent, and worn, and ghastly, as he was when he fell dying by the roadside! Do the dead ever come back to us, Wouriski? If they do it is to tell us to avenge them."

With his arms folded, and his glowing eyes still fixed upon the

speaker, Wouriski waited in silence for him to go on. The look was a command, and Stavieski willingly obeyed.

"And then, just as I was going away, I saw a note lying open upon the table. It contains only a few lines; but I have preserved it carefully. Read it for yourself."

Michael handed the note to his companion, who scanned it silently and returned it, with the look of expectation still on his face. He did not ask a question; he simply waited to hear more.

"I took possession of the note, Wouriski, and came away from the house. Casimir—well as we love him—is no longer a kindred soul. He has become dead to Poland; he has almost forgotten his wrongs. To him, therefore, it is best to say nothing about the thoughts that have come to me. They have come, I verily believe, as messages from the dead. But Casimir would not listen to me if I told him so."

Wouriski shook his head.

"He would not listen, even if I were to tell him of all the evil that this daughter of perdition is doing now. He would not believe that she is spying and betraying still. But I know it, my friend; and you know it also. As to our principles, there is no need to remind you of them; would that they were shared by Casimir! We hold that when the life of any man inflicts deadly injuries on other lives, he forfeits his right to live. We hold that it is not only a sinless, but a meritorious deed to send a murderer to his doom. And Paulina Lorenski is a murderess. She slew your father—the kind old gentleman who had ever been her friend—as surely as if she had stabbed him with her own white hands. And Paul—if Paul still breathes, he prays that every breath may be his last! Has she not done wrong enough? Is not her measure of iniquity full?"

"It is full," Wouriski answered solemnly.

The two stood looking at each other for a moment with gleaming eyes. And then, turning to the note again, Stavieski went on speaking:

"We shall want the assistance of a third person, if our plan is to be carried out. There is a man called Reichardt—a German—employed at some livery stables, close to this place. He can be depended on to any extent, and we will make use of him on Sunday night."

"You have yet to tell me your scheme for Sunday night," said Wouriski, thoughtfully. "The Greggs will be absent all day, I know. Mrs. Gregg said that they were going into the country and would not return till near midnight. To-day is Thursday. Is there time to make all your preparations? Do we run much risk if we fail?"

"We run no risk at all if we fail to capture her. There is plenty of time, my friend. The preparations are simple and few."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

FRIDAY and Saturday went by, and Beatrice was still the languid, patient invalid.

The Miltons' kindness was unwearied. Harriet took her out for a country drive; but her enjoyment in nature was almost gone. She thought of bright hours spent under leaf-laden boughs—of pleasant rambles across the short sweet grass—when Godwin Earle was by her side. He was so near and yet so far; so loving and yet so estranged.

"The silence of life, more pathetic than death's"

had come between these two; and they were always longing for the sound of each other's voices, always dreaming of old tender words, that echoed in their ears. Every day seemed as long as a week used to be; yet days went and came, and did not bring them together.

On Sunday morning Beatrice listened to the jangling of many bells, and wondered when she should have heart and strength to go to church again. Harriet kissed the girl, and went off with her husband and her prayer-book in rather a dismal mood.

"She does not seem to get much better, Richard," she said, as they walked towards St. Peter's church. "I don't like this long-continued patience of hers. She is merely the ghost of the bright girl who was always complaining of my slowness and dulness! You sometimes say that I am too brisk for you, but I was never brisk enough for Beatrice. And that poor Godwin, too!"

"You may well say *poor* Godwin," replied Richard Milton, dolefully. "The sight of his melancholy face in the office takes all the sweetness out of my life. As to Corder, he is determined that Earle's name shall be cleared somehow. I don't know what steps he is taking, but he will not rest. It seems hard that people who have such a strong wish to make others happy should be powerless. Earle is possessed with a morbid spirit, I believe. Even if Corder advances the three thousand for the missing necklace, Godwin will still feel himself a suspected and dishonoured man."

"Who suspects him?" cried Harriet, impatiently. "Not Mr. Corder—nor you and I. Certainly not Beatrice. Then why does he make us all miserable because of the suspicions of those silly old women at Fairbridge, and the ravings of a violent old man? Why not be happy, in spite of those who don't believe in him? If I were in his place, I would never let the people who did not love me have a stronger influence than those that did! It is terribly absurd."

"If you were Godwin, you would feel as Godwin feels," Richard Milton answered. "He is crushed under the weight of undeserved misfortunes; he has lost heart, and begins to think that he cannot fight against fate. That old coffee-planter's abominable words have

left a sting behind them. He feels that his love is the shadow that comes between Beatrice and the sun of prosperity."

"A woman does not want to walk alone in the sun," remarked Harriet, still impatient. "If this kind of thing is to go on much longer, I shall write, and say that he is killing the girl."

"I am sure that he is killing himself," said her husband, sadly.

Coming out of church, Harriet abused the choir and the sermon in a way that would have made Richard Milton smile in happier days. But he understood the trouble that was worrying his good little wife, and sighed.

In the afternoon—that sleepy Sunday time—Beatrice seemed suddenly to rally from her long spell of silent depression. She insisted on getting off the sofa, and making Harriet lie upon it. And then, with gentle force she pushed Mr. Milton into the best of the easy chairs. They looked at her and wondered. But both silently hailed these first signs of returning vitality.

"I am better," she said, answering those earnest looks. "My dear, kind friends, your patience has been sorely tried. But new thoughts have come to me now, and I am determined to get back my strength again. Do not think of me any longer as a sick girl; do not believe that this trouble has spoiled my life. There is a brighter time coming for Godwin and me. I feel it—I know it—I will not despair any more."

She went out of the room, and left them astonished and glad. How had this sudden uplifting of the spirit come to pass? Beatrice herself could not have told what mysterious power had raised her out of the gloom that had settled upon her life. She only knew that there was hope and strength coming after sorrow and confusion of heart. And as she passed slowly upstairs the feeling grew stronger. She seemed to be making her way upward to the light.

The drawing-room door stood open; Madame Valerot had gone out. But Beatrice did not pause to glance at her cushions and flowers. A strain of sweet music came drifting down from Vordenberg's room: and she stopped, and leaned against the banisters to listen.

It was the air that she had heard him play when she had first come to the house. He had never given it any name; it seemed to be the outpouring of his own soul; a long lament ending in a triumphant burst of gladness. She waited until the triumph-burst came; and it filled her with a divine serenity. Peace was coming; the wild storm in her heart was hushed; she was going to be happy again.

Vordenberg looked up and saw her standing in his doorway; her deep-blue eyes looking larger and darker than he had ever seen them yet. She was changed slightly; the sweet face was a little thinner, the features seemed sharpened. But her smile had gained a new beauty and gave him a silent greeting.

"At last!" he said, taking her hand and drawing her into the room with quiet gentleness. "It is good in you to remember your old music-master. He has missed you sadly!"

He had placed her in the arm-chair by the window, and stood looking down into her face with all his desire to keep her in his gaze. She understood that longing of his at once. Her thought had gone back to that winter evening when she had told him the story of her love. He had made her a promise then; he was waiting for her to remind him of that promise now.

"Mr. Vordenberg," she said, "you told me last winter to trust you always. You promised to be my friend. I am come here to confide in you and tell you about my sorrow, as I once told you about my happiness."

"I thank Heaven you have come," he answered quietly. "I have been waiting for this."

Her wistful face lit up at these words. She began her tale at once, speaking in a low, soft voice, and looking straight at her listener, who had seated himself on an opposite chair. She had resolved to keep back nothing; he should know the whole history of her lover's strange trouble, from beginning to end.

"Ever since I have known Godwin Earle," she said, "he has been under a cloud. The shadow of a suspicion has been resting on him for two years, darkening his life and blighting his hopes. But he is innocent—I need not tell you he is innocent."

Vordenberg's smile answered her.

"He is suspected," she continued, her face growing paler and paler, "of stealing a ruby necklace worth three thousand pounds, entrusted to him by his aunt, the Countess Gradizoff."

The dark eyes gazing into hers flashed suddenly—almost fiercely.

"The Countess Gradizoff!" Vordenberg repeated in a strangely eager tone. "Are you quite sure that she is the aunt of Godwin Earle?"

"I am quite sure," replied Beatrice. "She was a Miss Earle, who married Count Gradizoff, and went to Russia with her husband. After his death she returned to England with her daughter, and has been living ever since with her sisters in Fairbridge. The ruby necklace, which has been the cause of all our trouble, was once the property of Count Gliska, an exiled Polish nobleman. It passed into the hands of Count Gradizoff, and was given by him to his wife."

Vordenberg rose suddenly from his seat; a flush mounted to his pale forehead, and the light in his eyes seemed to grow brighter and brighter.

"The ruby necklace," he said, with peculiar quietness, "was never given by Count Gradizoff to his wife. The thing that was stolen from her—if stolen it was—had never belonged to Count Gliska."

"How do you know this?" asked Beatrice, breathlessly. "Oh,

Mr. Vordenberg, it was an inspiration that sent me to you to-day! Is the mystery about to be cleared up at last?"

She bent towards him, her eyes dilated, one hand outstretched in passionate entreaty, the other pressed upon her heart. He strove at once to calm her.

"It is about to be cleared up, I verily believe. But you must collect yourself, my dear child, and tell me the whole story as clearly as you can. Later on I will see Earle, and tell him all that I know about the matter."

And Beatrice, conquering all emotion, did relate the tale with calmness and precision, leaving out nothing that Godwin had told her. When she had finished, there was a smile on Vordenberg's face. His dark eyes were shining with a softer light; he looked happier than she had seen him yet.

"I, too, have begun to believe in presentiments," he said quietly. "I have lately had a conviction that you would come to me one day in sore need of aid, and I should be able to help you. Do not yet ask how I have obtained my knowledge of the history of the necklace. But answer me, if you can, just one more question."

"What is it? I will answer anything."

"Did Earle tell you whether there was a Polish governess living with Madame Gradizoff when the necklace was missed? Did he ever mention the name of Paulina Lorenski?"

Beatrice reflected for a few moments.

"No," she replied at last. "If he had ever mentioned that name I am sure I should have remembered it. He has talked to me often about his two unmarried aunts. But he did not care to speak much of the Countess Gradizoff, or of anything that concerned her. He seemed to dislike the very sound of her name."

"That was natural enough," remarked Vordenberg, in his tranquil tone. "And now, my child, I have no more to say on this subject to-day. Let your mind be at rest; go and tell your friend that you have seen a glimpse of light. As for me, I am going to call on Earle. Will you tell me where he lives?"

Beatrice joyfully gave the number of the house in which her lover was still living.

"I hope you will find him at home!" she said, anxiously.

"Do not be uneasy," he answered. "I shall see him, never fear."

He went with her to the door of the room, held her hand in a warm clasp for a second, and let her depart.

A few moments later, Harriet, waking from rather a long nap, opened her eyes to see Beatrice standing, and smiling on her. What change had passed over the girl? She was so different; so happy and beautiful.

Mrs. Milton began a string of eager questions. Where had she been? Had she seen anyone? Or heard anything?

"I have seen no one but Mr. Vordenberg," she answered," and he

bade me tell you that I have caught a glimpse of light. It is a very bright glimpse. Oh, Harriet, he knows something about that wretched necklace!"

"Nonsense, dearest," said Harriet, incredulously. "What can he know?"

"Much more than he has told me. He is going to see Godwin, to-day."

"Really? I always thought him a most remarkable man. But how he comes to be mixed up in that necklace mystery, I can't possibly imagine. Oblige me by waking Richard up. He has been snoring, and it is bad for him to snore. We must tell him about Mr. Vordenberg."

But Richard Milton woke up opportunely of his own accord, and was soon wide-awake enough to hear all that Beatrice had to say. He listened, stroking his chin thoughtfully, with a bewildered look on his honest face.

"Harriet," he said, at last, "who *is* Vordenberg? What do we know of him? Nothing. And yet Beatrice, guided by some mysterious instinct, goes to consult him in her troubles, and immediately gets promises of help and consolation. Can you explain all this?"

"Certainly not," responded his wife, promptly. "I have come to my wits' end. As to Mr. Vordenberg, if he were to turn out to be the Wandering Jew, or Cagliostro, or anyone of that sort, I should not be in the least surprised. But for all that, I steadfastly believe in him."

"I trust him with all my heart," said Beatrice, with shining eyes. "At present I can only sit still and wait. Let us all be happy again," she added, stroking Harriet's hair with a gentle touch. "I feel as if the old life were coming back."

The clocks were striking five when Vordenberg left the house, and bent his steps to Bulstrode Street to call on Godwin Earle. But Godwin was not in; and the servant could not tell when he was likely to return.

Turning away from the door, Vordenberg walked slowly along the quiet little street, now warm with golden sunshine. Two sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, in white coiffes, passed him with a band of small children. A sunny-faced girl came marching by with her lover, a little boy ran whistling home from afternoon service. He took another turn in the street, making up his mind as to what he should do, and finally retraced his steps along Welbeck Street; resolved to go for a stroll, and come back once more to Godwin's lodgings.

He walked on and on, through Vere Street and into Oxford Street, turning his face towards the Marble Arch. All the London world seemed to be out-of-doors that day. The houses were bright with flowers, windows were open, lace curtains swayed in a gentle breeze. The lights were so warm and the shadows so deep, that it seemed as if some gleams of an Italian sky had come to visit our English city.

He was nearly opposite to the Arch, when he caught sight of the man whom he sought, coming slowly along the pavement to meet him.

If Beatrice had changed, so also had Godwin Earle. The sunshine fell on the hollows of his cheeks and the dark shades under his sad eyes. He was looking dreamily before him, seeing nothing. Vordenberg stopped and spoke.

"I have been to your lodging," he said. "It is fortunate that we have met. I want to have a long talk with you."

"A long talk," said Godwin, in languid wonder. "Shall we turn into the park and find a seat? We can't do better, I think."

They had some difficulty in finding a bench that suited them. But at last, coming across a seat that had two happy and pre-occupied lovers at one end of it, Vordenberg proposed that they should sit there. The young couple had ears only for each other, and a private conversation might be carried on in safety near them.

"Mr. Earle," Vordenberg began, somewhat ceremoniously, "I must, first of all, apologise for meddling in your affairs. But Miss Ward has told me, to-day, the whole story of the loss of the necklace; and, strange as it may seem, I think I can throw some light on the matter. You are under the impression, of course, that the missing necklace was the same which once belonged to Count Gliska, and had been valued at three thousand pounds?"

"It was the very same," Godwin answered, without hesitation. "The Countess Gradizoff received it from her husband. Poor Gliska belonged, it seems, to the long list of plundered Poles; and Gradizoff, a man of great influence in his own country, appropriated some of his jewels. There can be no mistake in the case."

"Pardon me; there is either a mistake, or something far uglier. Gradizoff was, as you have said, a man of great influence in his own country; but he was also a needy man, whose means were insufficient for his wants. He never gave his wife the necklace. But he did give her something which passed exceedingly well for the real thing."

"Are you sure of this?" Godwin's eyes opened incredulously.

"Perfectly sure. And certain, too, of something else that will surprise you greatly. But before I go any further, there is a question that I want to ask you. Was there a woman, called Paulina Lorenski, in the house when the necklace disappeared?"

"There was a Miss Lorenski living with the Gradizoffs at that time. She came with them from Russia, as my cousin Olga's governess."

"Thank you," said Vordenberg, with a bright look. "I shall get on now, I believe."

"But why do you ask these questions?" enquired Godwin eagerly. "How is it that you are possessed of secret information about the necklace? Do you know where it is now?"

"I know where the real necklace is," Vordenberg replied calmly.

You can see it to-morrow, if you choose, with your own eyes. How is it that I know these things? Well, I will tell you that, and a great deal more besides, if you will dine with me at six to-night? We will go to Blanchard's, and take a table in the quiet upper room there. What do you say? Will you accept my help in this affair?"

"I should be utterly mad and ungrateful if I did not accept it," rejoined Godwin, still hopelessly puzzled, but remembering Beatrice's strong belief in the man beside him.

In years that are yet to come, Godwin Earle will never enter that upper room in Blanchard's restaurant, without recalling one of the most momentous evenings in his life. There were a good many people dropping in to dine at the tables; pretty women, whose cloaks were obsequiously taken from them by attentive waiters; well-dressed men who studied the menu with languid interest. The two men, sitting at a table near the window at the top of the room, gave little heed to the other diners. But if an artist had been near them he might have found much to study in their faces.

Vordenberg, always noble of aspect, had something exalted in his look as he talked in low tones to his companion. There was fire as well as triumph in his glance; but it was a triumph of the highest kind. And Godwin, listening intently, gradually began to reflect the light that shone upon him from the other's eyes. Through that mask of impassiveness which a well-bred man always wears in the world's presence, there came at last a gleam of such joy as is seldom seen on any face. The heavy cloud was rolling away from his life.

It was a quarter past eight when they left the restaurant, and went out into Regent Street. A calm evening sky was overhead; stars had begun to twinkle above the house-tops; a soft breath of night came stealing along the stately street; and to both these weary hearts it seemed like a whisper of peace.

"We part here," said Vordenberg, pausing, and holding out his hand. "I am going to see my poor old Polish friends. And you, I know, will not sleep until you have been to the Miltons' house."

Godwin answered him with a smile, and a few broken words of gratitude. And then each went his way.

As Vordenberg turned his steps in the direction of Wardour Street, he was conscious of a new delight in life. Never, even in the days of his happy love, had he looked as handsome as he did when he entered that dim street. A light was in his face. He had the self-forgetful look of one who has passed beyond the temptations of selfish passion, and has found, on some high region, a place of eternal rest.

Forgetting that this was Sunday, and that the door of Gregg's shop would probably be locked, he laid his hand on the latch. It yielded; and he went into the house.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

THE wheels of life had been running smoothly with Pauline Valerot for many months. She no longer sighed in vain for amusements; no longer sat at her window and envied the girls passing by. There were pleasant houses to go to; pleasant people to meet. Her friend, Julia de Busigny, had come from Paris, and admitted her into new circles. Madame de Busigny was a widow; a pretty, gay little American, who had given herself and her fortune to a poor French gentleman. Monsieur de Busigny had died just in time to save the fortune. And Julia, by no means inconsolable, had come to take up her quarters for a time in London.

The widow was well protected in her rooms in Torrington Square, but she managed to enjoy herself to the utmost. There was a grave brother from Boston, who read industriously at the British Museum; and there was a true Yankee aunt with a talent for managing. But neither brother nor aunt interfered with her doings, nor did they take much notice of her friends. Being intensely self-satisfied, Julia could afford to be good-natured. Her liking for Pauline was quite sincere as far as it went, and the two women amused themselves very well.

On Sunday evening, Madame Valerot began the business of dressing early. She wanted to try the effect of a new gown; a ravishing combination of crimson and silver-grey, and cascades of creamy lace. And as she stood before the mirror that hung between her two windows, she congratulated herself (not unreasonably) on the charms of the sumptuous little person reflected there.

A message had been left for her in the afternoon by a young girl:—Madame de Busigny would send the carriage at a quarter to eight, instead of eight.

Precisely at a quarter to eight the wheels came rolling up to the door. Madame Valerot turned and took a last look at herself in the glass. What a pretty woman she was! How well diamonds looked on people who had dark-brown eyes! She smiled at her own image; the bright innocent smile of a well-pleased child. And then she caught up that favourite white fluffy shawl of hers, and tripped lightly downstairs.

The carriage was a heavy, old-fashioned, closed vehicle, made to seat four persons. William had the hall-door opened, and just outside on the pavement stood a decent-looking young woman with a pleasant ruddy face.

"I beg your pardon, madame," she said, respectfully, with a slight foreign accent. "But Madame de Busigny has told me to come to her this evening. And there are some parcels—important parcels, that must be taken without fail."

"Very well," said Pauline carelessly.

She entered the carriage and William shut her in. The girl climbed lightly up to the box beside the driver, and the horse moved on at a brisk pace.

Quite happy, and absorbed in self, Madame Valerot scarcely noticed a package that was lying on the opposite seat. It looked like a draper's parcel, not very large, and tied up neatly with string.

How merry seemed the streets of London on this fair night in June! Lamps twinkling down long vistas; chance lights shining across the tall houses; soft mists gathering over the whole scene. And then the ceaseless roar of wheels; the moving of vast crowds; the everlasting stir of restless life. Pauline, in her gay mood, was ready to enjoy it all. The small windows of the carriage were both open, but it was a close, ugly conveyance, and had a stuffy smell. She drew her shawl around her shoulders and sat forward to get a little fresh air.

The coachman turned at length into a narrow side street, murky and dim. But Pauline was little acquainted with the by-ways of town, and did not concern herself about the route that he was taking. She had leaned back upon the cushions again. The June evening was fresh and chill. A little wind was rising, creeping through the air with a cold breath that was not like the sigh of summer. She shivered and muffled herself in the shawl.

The carriage came suddenly to a standstill. And then in an instant the door was opened and the ruddy young woman got in.

"A thousand pardons, madame," said the girl in a flurried tone. "I am anxious about the parcels. There should be two parcels. Madame de Busigny will never forgive me if one is lost. It is not here! Pray pardon, madame! It must be on your seat."

Astonished, startled and annoyed at the girl's intrusion, Pauline was about to protest against all this fuss. But what was going to happen? The young woman was on the seat by her side—was holding her with a grasp of iron—was pressing a handkerchief close to her face. It was all a bad dream, there was no young woman—no carriage—only a strange blank that seemed to be the end of everything.

A loud singing in the ears, a vague impression of strong light—these were the sensations which accompanied Madame Valerot's return to consciousness.

She found herself placed on a chair, in a room of moderate size, sparingly and shabbily furnished. The blind was drawn closely down, shutting out the last faint glow of the summer sky; and the light which had dazzled her eyes came from the strong glare of a paraffin lamp, on a table under the window.

Two men were in the room. One of them was standing near the table, so that the lamp-light shone full upon his face. He was a tall man, of a stately presence, pale and sallow; and his dark eyes

intensely bright, were fixed on Madame Valerot with a look that seemed to freeze the blood in her veins. For some time she stared at that face with a fascinated gaze, haunted by a terrible sense of its familiarity. Who was this man? Would he never speak? Was he a human being, or a dreadful apparition, summoned back, by her fear-stricken conscience, from the far-past?

"Paulina Lorenski," said the man, in a deep, stern voice, "do you know who I am? Can you utter my name?"

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, suddenly rising, and retreating to the very wall of the room. "It cannot be you! Let me go! Let me go!"

She turned towards the wall, and tried to cling to it in wild terror, uttering piteous cries for help all the while. The other man stepped up to her and laid a heavy hand on her shoulder.

"If you cry out again, you are a dead woman," he said, hissing the words into her ear. "No help is near. Long before anyone can get to this room we shall have killed you. Silence, if you do not want to die without a moment's preparation."

An agonised sob burst from her white lips; and then came a word that sounded like "Mercy."

"Mercy!" echoed the first speaker, scornfully. "What mercy did you show to the old man, who welcomed you to his house with a warm heart? What mercy did you show to the poor girls who believed in you as a sister, and trusted you with the secrets of their father and lover? What mercy did you show to the young man, whose letter you stole? You, the traitress, the paid spy of the accursed Muscovite—do you dare to speak of mercy?"

At these words, which seemed to leave her no hope, Madame Valerot raised herself, and looked pleadingly at her judges with wild brown eyes.

"Oh, forgive me!" she panted. "I was forced by Count Gradizoff to do all that I did! It was not of my own free will that I betrayed my friends. And I did not—I swear that I did not know—how severely they would be dealt with. You are so changed, John Wouriski, that I did not recognise you at first. But now that I look at your face, I remember all your kindness in the past. I loved you all—I call God and his saints to witness that I loved you all—and I hated, from my very soul, the part that I was made to play."

"How is it, then, that one who hated the part so much should play it still?" demanded Stavieski, with a bitter laugh. "How long is it since you have taken the pay of the Muscovite, Paulina?"

"I do not know you—I cannot recollect you," said Madame Valerot, with a confused glance at him. "What harm have I done you, that you should be so harsh to me?"

"Have you forgotten that Paul Stavieski had a brother?" asked Michael, with a terrible look. "I am that brother; and I have lived to avenge him."

The unhappy woman fell upon her knees, and stretched out her clasped hands to these inexorable accusers. Her eyes were wild and strained with the horror of the moment: her face deathly pale. The white shawl had fallen off her shoulders, revealing the emeralds and diamonds that glittered on her bosom; and the two men beheld the gems with a fierce contempt, visible in every line of their stern features.

"I was only a girl when I sinned against you!" she cried piteously. "Is there no pity in your hearts? Let me go in peace, and I will promise anything that you ask. You are poor—take my jewels."

Her trembling fingers strove to unclasp the necklace; but Wouriski stopped her by a haughty gesture.

"We will not touch your jewels," he said, contemptuously. "We had you brought here to-night—Stavieski and I—that we might take your life. Remember that you have forfeited the right to live—remember that we are not assassins, but righteous judges. If you know any prayer, say it. Your time has come."

"It is not possible that you mean to kill me!" Madame Valerot cried wildly. "The murder will be discovered; you will lose your own lives. You will be followed—even if you fly—and ——"

"Silence!" interrupted Wouriski, sternly. "What do we care about our lives? If we can save a few of our poor friends from misery and exile, we are content to be sacrificed. And you, if you were suffered to live, would go on with your infamous work of spying and betraying."

There was a wildness in the eyes of both these men that struck Pauline, even in this hour of awful terror. Were they, indeed, reasonable beings, or madmen? And yet, as she remembered their terrible wrongs, and the share that she had had in inflicting these injuries, the last spark of hope died out in her heart. They had watched her unawares; they had discovered the kind of work that this woman, seemingly so gay and frivolous, was really doing in the world. And she had believed herself perfectly unsuspected and safe.

She made a final effort to collect her energies and speak calmly. Her dry lips and parched tongue scarcely permitted her to utter the words that were in her thoughts.

"If you will spare me, you may make your own conditions," she said, humbly. "I will do nothing in future that can give you offence. Only forgive me for the past, and you shall shape my future according to your will. Perhaps I may even be of use to you. Recollect that I am by birth, and at heart, a Pole."

"At heart a fiend!" cried Stavieska, advancing towards her, in a frantic burst of rage. "Wouriski, my friend, do you hear her? She is trying to make us believe that she will give us the benefit of her services; the services for which the Muscovite has paid her so well. Bah! Those who serve the cause of patriotism, serve it for love alone.

The true patriots have no gold to give, and it is only with gold that such aid as yours can be bought. If we spared you to-night, you would betray us to-morrow. But we will not spare you. You shall die!"

She shrank away from his threatening hands, crouching against the wall, and breaking out into a shrill wail of agonised fear. He glanced suddenly over his shoulder, and said a few rapid words to Wouriski. There was a bottle on the table, and a large silk handkerchief. Chloroform? As Wouriski's hand moved towards the bottle, she divined his purpose, and, with a last shriek, flung herself headlong on the ground.

The shriek was answered by heavy blows upon the door. The two men paused and looked at each other.

"Open, open!" cried a well-known voice. "It is I—Casimir."

"The game is up," said Wouriski, in a tone of resignation. And he went to the door and unbolted it without another word.

Almost stupefied with horror and despair as she was, Madame Valerot caught the words, and lifted her head from the floor.

Vordenberg—pale, noble, composed as ever—had entered the room, and had shut the door behind him. Pauline knew that she was saved; knew it even before his calm voice broke the silence. Some faint recollection of his face began to stir in her mind, but she could not tell who he was. She only knew that he had an influence over these wild men, and that his coming had saved her.

"What was that cry?" he asked, looking from one to the other. "Who is this woman?"

He spoke the last words as his glance fell on Pauline's prostrate figure. She raised herself, and stretched out her hand to him in passionate appeal.

"Oh," she said, "you are just in time. In another moment they would have killed me. I have been entrapped and brought here by a vile scheme. Take me out of this house—take me away at once!"

And then, making a supreme effort, she rose to her feet and tottered up to him, clasping his arm, and clinging to him for support.

"Is it true?" he demanded sternly of his friends. "Did you indeed mean to take the life of a defenceless woman?"

"Casimir, do you not know that she is Paulina Lorenski?" Stavieski drew near them with a look that made Madame Valerot shudder, and hide her eyes again. "Do you not know that God has delivered her into our hands? Ah, my friend, how long will you be deaf to those messages from Heaven that come so plainly to Wouriski and me?"

"I, too, have had a message from Heaven." Vordenberg's voice, mellow and musical, had something almost angelic in its sound. "It is a message of forgiveness, and love, and peace. Until I heard it there was no rest for me, day or night; my heart was like the troubled

sea. My wrongs are as great, ay, greater than yours; but I will never take the work of vengeance into my own hands. Is it by a cowardly murder that a patriot should avenge himself on his country? Stavieski, how often I have warned you against brooding over your injuries! You have nursed them till you have become mad, and made Wouriski mad also. No sane men could have planned this dastardly assassination."

"It is you that are mad," retorted Stavieski fiercely "You have forgotten Poland, and you would protect a murderess and a traitress. Her own father would scarcely bid us spare her; and she shall not be spared!"

In an instant Vordenberg placed himself in an attitude of defence. His face was still calm, but it wore a look of stern determination.

"Come one step nearer, Michael," he said, "and, well as I have loved you, I will strike you down."

Wouriski started forward, and seized his companion by the arm. While Vordenberg had been speaking he had listened in silence, and the fury had slowly died out of his face.

"Be still, Michael," he said authoritatively. "You cannot lift your hand against your benefactor and mine. Remember what Casimir has been to us. If he demands that this woman shall live, her life is sacred. As for you and me, we shall have to answer for this night's work."

"I would take care that you should answer for it," replied Vordenberg, "if I thought there were any fear of your repeating it. You shall pledge yourselves never again to attempt to injure a hair of Madame Valerot's head. And you shall leave this country."

Wouriski bowed his head in submission.

"We have no country," he said resignedly. "To us all lands are alike. We will depart. But think, if you can, sometimes, of those who cannot take their wrongs as placidly as you have taken yours. Remember that in our souls the sense of degradation and just wrath will burn until our dying day. You can trust us, Casimir. We are ready to give the pledge that you require; and we will go this very night."

"That is well," said Vordenberg, still speaking coldly. "I will furnish you with necessary funds. To-morrow I shall come here and pay the landlord. Here is money for your immediate wants, and you will write and tell me where I am to send more."

He laid some gold and notes on the table, and Wouriski received them in silence. Michael, standing in a corner of the room, had buried his face in his hands.

"Madame," Vordenberg continued, turning to the trembling Pauline. "You will pardon your countrymen for this thing that they have done? Look back on your own youth—remember the old days in your dear country—and ask yourself whether they have not had

terrible provocation. I knew your father, madame, and I speak to you now as he would speak if he were with us once again. Forgive, even as you hope to be forgiven. I, who have saved your life, now ask this boon."

"I do forgive," answered Pauline, in a voice that shook with genuine feeling. "And, as God sees us all, I swear that I will be a different woman from this night."

Michael raised his head, and looked at her for a moment. All the wild brilliancy had faded out of his eyes, leaving them soft and kind. But he was trembling from head to foot, and he uttered not a word. Wouriski still stood motionless and impassive as a figure carved in stone. And the last impression that Pauline carried away with her from that dreadful room, was Stavieski's parting look.

Madame Valerot and Vordenberg went downstairs, and out into the narrow street together. She had muffled her head in the white shawl, and was weeping quietly as they hastened along. He felt her hand trembling as it lay upon his arm, but he did not speak. As soon as possible he hailed a cab, and they drove back to Wimpole Street in silence.

He opened the house-door with his key, and they entered quietly, without seeing any member of the household. Gently and tenderly he supported her upstairs, and led her back to the pretty room that she had left, in such gay spirits, little more than an hour ago.

His presence seemed to give her wonderful peace and strength. She had dreaded being left alone after the awful ordeal that she had gone through. He did not ring for the servants, but moved softly about the room, doing little common-place things—drawing down the blinds, and lighting the lamp with his own hands. Then he poured out a glass of wine and brought it to her side.

"You must drink this, Paulina," he said, with the utmost gentleness. "And you must learn to look upon me as your friend—I was your father's friend. Poor child, if he had not been so cruelly torn from you, how different your whole life would have been!"

A flood of tears answered him. But they were wholesome tears, flowing from a source that had been closed for many a day, and they calmed her and relieved her heart.

"Who are you?" she asked, looking up at him at last. "How is it that you know me so well; and—those men, my countrymen—why did they obey you? You are called Vordenberg, I know. But is that really your name?"

"I will answer all your questions later on," he said, with a smile. "There are things that I want you to tell me first. Paulina, you said a little while ago that you would be a different woman from this night. Many have made such vows at the moment of a great deliverance. Do you think that you will have strength to keep yours?"

"I do think so," she answered gravely. And the beautiful brown eyes looked earnestly and candidly into his. "Never before have I

been brought face to face with death. I used to live my life without thinking much about it. But I can never live in that careless way again. All the evil that I have done is revealed to me in a new light."

"And you are willing, if you can, to atone for that evil? Ah, Paulina, I have an idea that there is one wrong that you may very easily set right."

"What is it?" she asked, quickly. "I cannot recall Paul Wouriski from Siberia; I have no power to do that."

"The wrong of which I speak has nothing to do with any of your unhappy countrymen. But there is an Englishman, an innocent man, accused of a crime of which he cannot prove himself guiltless. For two years he has lived under the shadow of this cloud, and now it has come between him and the girl he loves. She thoroughly believes in his innocence, but he has given her up because he cannot clear his name. Paulina, if you can clear him, will you do it? What became of the Countess Gradizoff's necklace?"

A hot flush dyed Madame Valerot's pale face. Her brown eyes sought the ground, and there was a moment of silence.

"Well," she said, drawing a long breath, and looking up again with sudden courage; "I am determined to prove myself sincere. You saved my life to-night, and you have a right to demand anything in return; even a humiliating confession. It was I who stole the necklace."

He put out his hand and grasped hers gently and firmly.

"Now I know that you do indeed mean to be true," he said, earnestly. "You have not shrunk from your first penance. Go on, and tell me how the necklace was taken."

"In the first place," she continued, "you must know that Count Gradizoff possessed himself of a famous ruby necklace, which had belonged to poor Count Gliska. Great Heaven! I think there are few of my countrymen who have suffered more than Gliska did! I have heard the story a hundred times. Under the pretence that he was concerned in the attempt to assassinate General Berg, the soldiers broke into his house in Warsaw. He was absent. But his aunt, an old lady of more than fourscore, was there with his betrothed bride, a young girl of great beauty. It was never known exactly how poor Sofie Pauliski died. But there are those who caught a glimpse of her at one of the windows, dishevelled and bleeding —— Mr. Vordenberg, you are ill!"

"No, no; it was merely a spasm of pain at the heart. But I, too, have heard that story. And Count Gradizoff obtained the necklace from a soldier?"

"Yes. You know, of course, that Gliska fled for his life. And Gradizoff, who had always professed a great liking for him, took possession of all that he could lay hands upon. The necklace was, I believe, the most valuable thing, and the Countess was always at

her husband about it, night and day. When his health failed, he began to desire a little peace. And at last he gave her the supposed necklace just before he died."

"Then it was not the real thing?"

"You shall hear. I accompanied the Countess and her daughter to her old home in Fairbridge, and a duller time I never spent. Her sisters, a couple of innocent old ladies, succumbed to her imperious temper without even a struggle. No one fought with her; no one contradicted her. Saints! It was a life that made the blood stagnate in the veins! You know her nephew, that unfortunate Earle? You are interested in him?"

"Deeply interested."

"She detested him. She always wanted Canon Earle to alter his will, and leave Meadow House to herself. Somehow she had found out that he had left it to Godwin, and that was enough to make her the young man's enemy. Looking back on the events of that time, I am inclined to believe that she entrusted him with the necklace because she hated him. Anyhow, she bragged about the rubies till her sisters were afraid for them to remain in her keeping. And then Godwin took charge of them."

Pauline paused, and took a flask of eau de Cologne from the table near. She poured some upon her handkerchief, and bathed her face before she proceeded with her story.

"When he had taken the thing into his care, I conceived the idea of stealing it. I had always had a passion for jewels, and I argued that there was no sin in taking from the Countess that which her husband had stolen from a countryman of mine. Poor Godwin, who trusted everybody in the house, had told the aunts in my hearing that he had locked up the necklace in a strong box in his room. I watched my opportunity, and it came. I think the opportunities for doing evil are just those that are sure to come!"

Again she paused, and pressed her hands to the cheeks that were now deeply flushed.

"In those days Godwin Earle was in love with a certain Alma Lindrick, a near neighbour. In the beginning it was a bread-and-butter love, I think, and must have begun when they were both in pinafores. She was the kind of girl that I, as a woman, detest; and I am convinced that I should have detested her quite as much if I had been a man. Cold—intensely correct—exceedingly commonplace! Well, he loved her then; and one evening, his aunt Jane contrived that the two should be alone together in the back drawing-room. Of course, the lover was absorbed in his sweetheart! It was my business to pour out coffee after dinner; and, as I knew something of the use of drugs, I put into Godwin's cup enough to ensure him a night's sound sleep."

Vordenberg was silent, and she went on:

"It is surprising what anybody may do in a confiding English

household. That night I crept into his room, took his keys, opened his strong box, and possessed myself of the necklace. Some days elapsed before the loss was discovered; and from first to last, no one seemed to have any suspicion of me."

"Are you sure that the Countess did not suspect you?"

"No; I am not sure. The Countess was a wonderfully crafty woman, Mr. Vordenberg. Her brother and sisters paid her three thousand pounds for the missing necklace!"

"I agree with you," said Vordenberg, with a smile. "The Countess Gradizoff must be a wonderfully crafty woman!"

"Soon afterwards," Pauline continued, "I took a tender farewell of my pupil and her mother. The Countess let me depart with her blessing. I came to London; and the first thing I did was to take the necklace to a goldsmith who bought second-hand jewels. Judge how I was punished for what I had done! The famous ruby necklace was not made of rubies, after all, but only of garnets; and its value was contemptibly mean! I did not part with it; I came away from the shop in disgust."

"You did not part with it?" Vordenberg repeated.

"No. You are my friend; I will put it into your hands this very night. See, you shall have it in another moment."

She started up, and going to the brass-bound desk, unlocked it. Then, returning to Vordenberg's side, she laid in his hands a necklace of red stones that glittered in the lamp-light. It had a curious old flat clasp of yellow gold.

"Paulina," he said quietly, "will you repeat your story in the presence of the Countess Gradizoff?"

"Yes," she returned, after a moment's consideration. "I am not afraid she will send me to prison. I have friends in St. Petersburg whom she would scarcely care to offend. And they would not be well pleased if she were to deal harshly with me."

"I do not think she is likely to deal harshly with you. There is a good deal more to be told of the necklace-story. It is not finished yet. Be assured, Paulina, that you will be all the better and happier for the confession you have made. Shall I leave you now? You have borne as much as it is possible for you to bear, and you need rest."

As he looked at her face, he noticed how changed it was. A few terrible minutes had done the work of years.

Madame Valerot was one of those women who can defy time, when time comes and goes without bringing them any strong emotion. The oft-told tale of the woman whose hair turned white in a single night is no fable, as we know; and the scene in Stavieski's room had hurried Pauline from youth to middle age. She would never be young again.

The excitement that had sustained her while she made her confession was gone. As she listened to Vordenberg's retreating

footsteps, she shivered and nestled among her cushions, feeling sick and chilled. She had had her day. Never again could she find the old sweetness in the cup of pleasure; never again could she join the gay procession which includes only the frivolous in its numbers. She did not want any more earthly delights; above all other things she desired a refuge.

She had ever clung to the faith of her country, and now, in this time of sore need, there rose before her eyes a vision of convent walls, of women with calm faces and quiet hearts, of unobtrusive works of charity and long hours of silent prayer. Was not this the life that was waiting for her?

Faint and weak, as if she had just risen from a bed of sickness, she got up slowly from the sofa, and locked herself into her chamber for the night. It was long before her eyes closed; long before she could forget, even for a moment, the stern faces and threatening voices of the men who had thirsted for her life. But at last slumber came, and brought her again that tranquil vision of retirement and peace.

Meanwhile, Vordenberg had gone quietly downstairs, and paused at the door of the Miltons' sitting-room. It was now ten o'clock, but there was a sound of several people talking in the room. He knocked, and Harriet's voice bade him come in.

Richard Milton and Mr. Corder were sitting on the sofa in earnest talk. Harriet was seated close by, putting in an eager word now and then. And through the open French window could be seen Beatrice and Godwin, lingering in the moonlight among the ferns and flowers in the little yard, and telling each other the "old, old story" all over again.

Vordenberg came in among them with his quiet stop. The lovers, hearing his voice, hastened indoors. Every one looked at him expectantly, prepared for some new revelation.

"Do you know what this is, Earle?" he asked, holding up something red and sparkling. Beatrice, who had never seen it before in her life, pounced upon it with a little scream. Godwin took it out of her eager hands, and examined it with joy and bewilderment on his face.

"I do know what it is," he answered, slowly. "It is the stolen necklace."

(To be continued.)

IN THE PAST.

By C. Haddon Chambers.

I.

"YOU will leave this house to-night."

"I am ready, sir."

"And with my will you will never enter it again."

The words were spoken slowly and sternly. Surely a father must have had terrible provocation before using them to his son! Surely the son must have behaved most despicably to have deserved them! But the provocation had not been terrible nor the conduct despicable. Frank Dewar had always been a wayward boy, and at the age of nineteen he was certainly wild. It was in the blood. For many generations back the males of the Dewar family were famous for their wildness. It was said of them that the process of sowing their wild oats extended over an unusually long period. They invariably began early and finished late. In more than one conspicuous instance the conclusion had not come at all. The reckless sower had, while still madly scattering worthless seed, been gathered, fruitless, out of time.

The father who now pronounced sentence of banishment from home upon his son, had not in his youth and early manhood been an exception to the family tradition. It was not until he had reached thirty, and his friends had given him up in despair, that a change came. Some men mend gradually. By slow degrees the light of wisdom, born of experience, grows upon their darkness, and one after another each folly is exposed to the improving judgment and abandoned. Such had not been the case with Mr. Dewar. All suddenly and without displaying the slightest indication of a disposition to mend his ways, he took a moral leap from the Equator to the North Pole, and so afforded still further justification for the remark that a Dewar was incapable of moderation. Mr. Dewar attached himself to a religious sect, famous for the rigidness of its moral code. The roué became an ascetic, the lover of wine a total abstainer, and the most conspicuous redeeming virtue of his youth—a certain large heartedness—was lost in austerity. Mr. Dewar had not sufficient charity left to condone in others the sins that had once been his.

One of the earliest results of his reform was his marriage with a woman who, in gentleness, in faith, and in pure charity, was well nigh perfect. They had two children—both boys. The eldest happily escaped the family propensities. Inheriting in a modified degree the later qualities of his father, he passed a decorous boyhood—enjoying paternal approbation, if not paternal love—entered a profession, married early, and was altogether a commendable success.

When Mr. Dewar saw that his son, Frank, was growing up a reproduction of his own early self, he appeared to conceive a distinct dislike for him. Deciding that the germs of wildness must be ruthlessly nipped in the bud, he held the parental reins with an irritating and galling tightness. Unconscious that he was doing his utmost to warp a naturally open and truthful boy, he watched his every movement and doubted his every word. Was it a natural though exaggerated solicitude lest his son should be as he had been, and live as he had lived? Or was it that his warped and diseased nature could not bear to contemplate the likeness of his own youth? I know not. But certain it was that the insane policy of watching and suspecting, tended to foster the antagonism he felt for his own child.

One other circumstance had the same effect. Mothers generally love the most wayward offspring best. It was so with Mrs. Dewar; and in addition, Frank came in for that share of his mother's love which his father had denied her, and his methodical, calculating brother had neglected to cultivate. The son returned it perhaps as fully as a mother's love—mysterious, unfathomable, deathless—may be returned.

"And with my will you will never enter it again."

"And against your will be sure I shall not."

The likeness between father and son was very striking, as they stood facing each other a few paces apart, the former with pale and gloomily angry face, leaning against the mantelpiece, and the other grasping the back of a chair, and returning his father's look with proud defiance. With the exception of the expressive brown eyes which his mother had given him, Frank had all the handsome features of the Dewars, from the square shaped forehead to the somewhat effeminate chin.

"You have brought this entirely upon yourself," said Mr. Dewar, after a long and painful silence. "You are drifting direct to perdition; you have grieved me beyond expression. Not a single command, not a single wish of mine have you regarded. I expressly forbade your remaining out of the house after nine in the evening. You are rarely home before eleven—generally much later. Your mother rose to let you in at two this morning. You had been with some fellows at a literary club, you said, but I now refuse to believe a word that falls from your lips. This quiet, regular, God-fearing home is not the home for you. Your presence defiles it—and I am resolved it shall not be defiled. We are told, if our right hand offends us to cut it off—I cut you off to-night."

"You may surely cut me off without insulting me," replied Frank. "Whatever I am, I am certainly not a liar."

"A few words more and I have done," pursued Mr. Dewar, ignoring the young man's indignant protest. "When you are twenty-

one you will receive your aunt's money. In the meantime I would advise you—though doubtless you will consider, as you always have, my advice valueless—I would advise you to give up your evil ways and companions, and try a little honest work. You will not find it among the set you have cultivated. Hitherto you have led an idle—worse than an idle life. There is a rude awakening in store for you if you think to earn a livelihood by what you call your 'literary talent.' Try a little honest work," he continued, again ignoring the interruption: "and in the meantime the twenty pounds you will find in that envelope on the table will keep you from want. That is all you need expect from me."

Mr. Dewar turned away, to intimate that the interview was at an end, and Frank moved towards the door with a strange new feeling at his heart, and wondering, poor fellow, whether it would be proper, under the circumstances, for him to proffer an adieu of any kind to his father. He was too proud, however, to take the initiative.

As he reached the door, his father's voice stopped him.

"You have forgotten the money."

"I have forgotten nothing," replied the young man. "If I cease to be your son, I will not remain a dependent upon you."

Then he opened the door and passed out. As he crossed the hall a hand was stretched from an opposite door, and he was drawn into a room where, in the darkness, his mother's arms encircled him and her low sobs beat against his breast.

"You must not go, Frank," she whispered at last.

"Mother, I must. How can I stay now?"

"I will speak to your father."

"He will not listen to you this time. He has held this threat of excommunication over me for a long time—until he has grown to believe that I tremble at the thought of it. Now he has resolved to carry it out. Let him do so."

"Frank, I can't let you go. I must speak to him first."

"You will only humiliate us both, mother."

"No, Frank. I promise you I shall not. Only a few words with him. Wait here for me."

Then she glided from the room, paused in the hall for a moment to collect herself, and entered her husband's presence.

It was agony for the son's proud heart to feel that his cold, harsh father was being pleaded with for his sake—an agony he had felt before, and endured for the sake of his mother's love. For himself he had no fears of the sentence of banishment. He was young, brave and sanguine, and the sips he had had of life had served only to stimulate his thirst. The prospect of release from the galling restraint of home inspired within him, not dread, but the most exhilarating anticipation.

Mrs. Dewar stood by her husband's chair with outward composure. Only the paleness of her face and the traces of recent weeping about

the sad, tender brown eyes—traces only too often to be seen there—told of the tumultuous grief that was tearing her heart.

John Dewar did not look up from the paper he was reading, or affecting to read. He had expected this visit and was resolved that it should not succeed.

"John!"

"Well?" he replied, still without looking up.

"You know what I have come for."

"I do. It is useless."

"You will not send that boy out into the night alone."

"He has accustomed himself to going into the night alone," replied her husband, with a sneer in his voice.

"I am not here to excuse his faults, John. They have given as much anxiety to me as to you. It is because of them that I would try to bind him still closer to home and to home influences."

"He is unable to properly appreciate either."

"He is young," continued Mrs. Dewar—"young, wayward and impressionable—and you would throw him into the cruel arms of the world. Don't do it, John!"

"It is utterly useless to argue the matter," was the cold reply. "Nothing will shake my resolve. I will hear no more on the subject, if you please."

Mrs. Dewar turned quickly and mechanically, and walked from the room, still outwardly calm; but the quivering lips had grown tight, and she moved like a somnambulist. Through the open door Frank saw her in the light of the hall, and knew that his anticipations of her non-success had been realised. She came into the dark room and seated herself.

"Don't mind, mother," he whispered presently, whilst he knelt at her side and his tears fell unrestrainedly upon her dress.

"Where will you go?" she asked, in a voice dry and hard with despair.

"Go? Oh! I'll—I shall be all right." He had not thought the matter out at all. The general idea that he would go from narrow limits into the broad free world, had been sufficient for him. He was young, and the world was kind, it would hold out its right hand and welcome him. He would be all right!

But his mother was less sanguine.

"Where will you go?" she repeated.

"I know, mother! I'll go immediately to Tom Anson and the fellows I know at the Bulwer Club. Tom will put me in the way of getting a decent lodging."

"But you have no money."

"Yes I have—a little; over three pounds, I think. He—my father—offered me some, but I would not take it. Tom will introduce me to some editors and I shall soon get work. You yourself have said that I may make a mark some day as an author; and I mean to do so."

So they talked with subdued voices in the darkness for some time, Frank trying hard to imbue his mother with his own hopefulness; but with little real success. True, her tears were dried, and she spoke with calmness; but there are moments when the dull despairing agony at our hearts is too great for outward emotion; and such a moment, now that it was absolutely decreed that she must lose her son, was Mrs. Dewar's. But, ever unselfish, she was thankful for the outward calm, for it would deceive Frank and enable him to go away with less weight on his mind than he could otherwise have done. What words she spoke need not be recorded. You tender mothers who have, or have had, sons have doubtless spoken such words; and you sons who have, or have had, tender mothers have doubtless heard them; words of ineffable love and thoughtfulness; words that die not soon, but linger the last of all softening memories in the very hardest hearts; words that angels pause to hear.

As Frank knelt at his mother's knee, listening to her voice and feeling her caressing hand straying over his hair, it is not strange that his soul swelled with the noblest aspirations and the purest resolves. He would be all she asked, do all she said. Such aspirations are good to feel, and such resolves to make. The former may subsequently sleep, or the latter be broken, but their conception is a moral gain, or at least an evidence of inherent good.

The great dining-room clock struck ten sonorous strokes, and Mrs. Dewar, with a slight shiver, rose.

"You must go now, my boy," she said, still maintaining her calm. "If you stay longer, you may miss your friends. Put everything you require into your portmanteau."

Then she led the way upstairs to his room and quietly assisted him in the easy task of packing the majority of his somewhat limited store of wearing apparel into a small portmanteau, which he could carry without difficulty.

When Frank descended, portmanteau in hand, he saw his mother standing, her back to the wall, upright and still, near the hall door. The face, in its dead whiteness, with the closed eyes and the poor drawn mouth, spoke with terrible eloquence of the chill anguish of a woman who felt she was losing her all, whose heart was upon the rack, with its quivering strings drawn to the utmost tension. Have not many of us felt that cruel strain and prayed that the suffering strings would break, so that we might die?

Frank kissed his mother's cheeks, and sobbed a good-bye. Then, leaving her motionless against the wall and icy cold with pain, he crushed his hat over his eyes and walked out into the night—and into the world.

II.

SITTING over his newspaper, Mr. Dewar was scarcely so composed as usual. The previous evening's debate in the House failed to rivet

his whole attention, although he would have refused to acknowledge the fact, even to himself. For, although he possessed the greatest abhorrence of lying in others, and would not, himself, knowingly have uttered a falsehood, he habitually practised self-deception with no small success. Strange that a man should choose himself as the victim of his own sophistry!

After scanning the columns with unfruitful diligence for some time, pausing occasionally and turning his head in a listening attitude, he let the paper fall on the floor, lay back in his chair, and reflectively passed his fingers through his hair in a manner peculiar to himself. Perfectly at ease he looked, and well satisfied. But his looks belied him. His ease was a cheat, and his satisfaction a delusion. A remote and small inner voice persisted in annoying him with its whispered doubts.

Presently Mr. Dewar rose. The silence without irritated him. Had Frank gone? If so, why had he heard no commotion in the hall? He was an inquisitive man, and he could not bear to be left in the dark as to even the most trifling circumstances which were going on around him. Approaching nearer the door, he stopped and listened attentively. Then for the first time he heard a sound—Frank's voice, bidding his mother good-bye.

Then he heard the hall door close, after which the silence was unbroken, although eloquent even to him.

Mr. Dewar took up a volume of "Barnes on the Acts," and returned to his easy chair. But he was unable to read. The little voice, like the unseen cricket which, from its temporary shelter in our fireplace, suddenly bursts into animation after a long silence, returned to distract him.

He rang the bell. It was answered by one of the servants—a young woman of prepossessing face, and eyes at the time suspiciously red. Little that goes on above-stairs escapes the attention of those below. The two servants of the Dewar household had not heard or seen much during the evening; but they possessed in a high degree the art of multiplying two by two, which they practised in this instance with the usual success. Then they wept, being retainers of some length of service and much attached to their mistress and "Master Frank;" and had Mr. Dewar heard the honest criticisms on his conduct which were uttered across the kitchen table, he would probably have been disagreeably astonished.

"Where is your mistress, Jane?"

"I'm not sure, sir; but I think she's gone to bed. I haven't seen her since—since—— "

She was going to say "Since Master Frank went," but she changed colour and added instead: "Since ten o'clock."

"Has cook gone to bed?" continued Mr. Dewar.

"Yes, sir."

"Then you had better go too; there will be no prayers to-night."

Mr. Dewar delayed for some minutes before taking his candle. Perhaps he felt no great inclination to meet his wife just then, or perhaps the events of the evening had opened up a train of thought which was not conducive to sleep. He found several trivial excuses for delay, such as winding up his watch—a task he always performed in his bedroom—replacing "Barnes" on the bookshelves, and raking the already cold embers from the grate.

At last he extinguished the lights of the room, took his candle, and walked slowly upstairs.

Mrs. Dewar was in bed, her eyes closed, and breathing slowly and regularly. Was she asleep? No. Her husband knew that she was not—he knew that under such circumstances sleep was impossible to her. Sleeplessness was no new burden to her. She had often lain awake till long after midnight, listening anxiously for the tap of her errant boy at the hall door, to creep out of bed when she heard it at last, and down the stairs to admit him.

"Are you awake, Mary?" asked Mr. Dewar, after remaining silent for some time.

"Yes, John," replied a low, weary voice.

"Then perhaps you will tell me if that boy has gone."

Of course he knew the boy had gone; but his humour was too bad to admit of silence. It must find some vent before he slept.

"Yes, he has gone," replied Mrs. Dewar, mechanically.

"And was it by your connivance that he went away like a thief, without coming to see me first?"

"He did not know that you wished to see him," protested the wife, wearily.

"Oh! of course you will defend him. You always have, in opposition to me. I have always been last in your consideration. Is it to be wondered at that a son plunges headlong on the road to destruction when he is protected and encouraged by his mother in disobedience to his father?"

"I have never done that, John."

"The very fact that Frank has left this house without attempting to say good-bye to me proves that he is thoroughly hardened and base, and that I have pursued the proper course with respect to him."

Very badly in need of proofs was John Dewar.

"Do you hear?" he asked, after a pause, as there was no reply.

"Yes, I hear, John. But my head is splitting."

Then Mr. Dewar was silent; and after awhile he slept.

And all through the long watches of the night the wife and mother lay, with aching head and aching heart, hopelessly awake. Her brain burned with its overload of thought; her heart bowed with its overload of woe. But she was not all forsaken. She had her faith, simple as that of a child; and she clung to it. In silent prayer her burden was lightened, and the welcome tears wet her pillow.

III.

THE BULWER was a small and unpretentious club of a literary character, and Frank Dewar was its newest and youngest member. Hither on the night of his dismissal from home he immediately repaired. He had several friends among the members, including the Mr. Tom Anson of whom he had spoken to his mother; and as it was the Club social evening, he was sure to find most of them there.

He was greeted by a buzz of welcome. His company was particularly acceptable on social nights, as he played the piano well, and could use the light tenor voice he possessed with considerable effect. Tenors are always socially popular now-a-days.

Mr. Tom Anson, who, being editor of a small weekly paper, was considered quite a personage at the club, immediately came forward to greet the young man.

"Better late than never!" he cried. "I was afraid you were not going to turn up."

"I want to speak to you a moment," said Frank, taking his arm, and drawing him aside.

"What's the matter? You look quite excited."

"I've left home for good, Tom."

Mr Anson expressed his surprise in a prolonged stare.

"What have you done that for, lad?"

"I couldn't help myself," replied Frank. "My father turned me out. You know we've been getting on horribly for a long time. He's a perfect tyrant, doesn't think I ought to be out after dark, and because I couldn't meet his views—well, he's given me the sack."

"And what are you going to do?" ejaculated Tom, sympathetically.

"Make a living somehow, of course; with my pen, if it's good enough."

"Is the old gentleman going to supply you with coin."

"No," answered Frank, colouring. "I wouldn't take it from him."

Tom glanced at the young face with superior pity.

"And, I say, Tom, I want you to put me in the way of getting comfortable lodgings. Any vacant rooms in your house?"

"Oh! I'll see that you're all right, my lad," cried Mr. Anson, carelessly. "And now for the present let's enjoy ourselves and forget all this bother."

In a few minutes the general conviviality was resumed, and Frank became the life and soul of the party. Never had his spirits been so high, so wild. He fairly carried the company with him, and the evening was afterwards looked back upon as one of the most successful in the history of the Club.

It was considerably past midnight, and Frank was at the piano, where he had been singing song after song. His voice was small but sweet and sympathetic, and he liked singing. He was about

to leave the piano when there came a special request from one of the company :

" Let us have that Christy song you gave us last time, Frank. You know which I mean." Frank *did* know. It was the very last song he would have chosen that night, but, having no excuses to offer, he sang it. It was a commonplace ballad enough, but with a pretty taking air and words full of sound sentiment that spoke of a happy home and a mother's love. He sang the ballad well, the better perhaps because it made his heart ache. When it was finished, he still sat at the instrument running his fingers over the keys. He dare not turn round, for his eyes were full of tears. He dare not let his thoughts linger with his mother, who, he knew was lying awake thinking of him, lest he should have wept outright. To have been able to lean forward upon the key-board and sob would have been a boon to him—better still to have been away in the wilderness alone, where he could have cried mightily, and relieved his breast of its strange oppression.

He longed, now, to be alone, and he rose from the piano determined upon retiring.

When he turned to the room, he found that during his preoccupation a great change had taken place. A large number of the members had disappeared, and the few who remained were preparing to depart. Frank hastily looked into the other rooms. They were all empty.

" Where is Anson ? " he then asked.

" Gone home," was the answer.

The indignant blood rushed to Frank's face. This was the world that he had expected to receive him with open arms ! These were the men he had counted upon and called friends, the men who had said they would guide him, and see that he was all right ! It was his first experience of the outer world he had thought so fair, and a bitter one. The first of many fond illusions had gone, and the edifice of cards must tumble !

Frank put on his hat and walked out into the deserted streets with a heart full of bitterness.

" Miserable, mean wretches," he muttered, turning up the collar of his coat, for a soft soaking rain was falling. They avoid me because I have no money or prospects, I suppose. They little know me if they imagine that I would come on them for anything."

Turning into Oxford Street he stopped under a lamp-post and looked at his watch. It was a quarter past two. What was he to do at that hour ? He knew that only expensive hotels kept night porters, and his means were terribly limited. He stood upon the wet pavement hesitating, and burning with anger and shame, anger against the heartless, selfish men who had abandoned him, and shame at the part he himself had played during the evening. It was a critical moment in Frank Dewar's life. In his humour then the very slightest incident might determine his fate, for good or ill.

Suddenly he heard a step behind him, and he was touched on the shoulder.

"Which way are you going, Dewar?"

Turning quickly, Frank recognised one of the club members, named Carson, whom he knew but very slightly.

"I'm not quite sure yet," he replied with some confusion.

"Forgive me for asking you," said Mr. Carson easily; "but the fact is I heard you tell some of the fellows that you had left home, and wanted to find lodgings, and it struck me that in staying there, and making the evening so enjoyable for us all, you were forgetting your own interests. Then when you left, I thought that you might have to tramp a long way in the rain before finding an hotel you could get into. That is why I took the liberty of following you, to offer you a shakedown."

"You're very good," replied Frank, quickly; "but ——"

"Please don't say but," interrupted Mr. Carson, calmly, and recognising the young man's ready pride. "And please don't say that I am good. It is, as I said, only a shakedown that I can offer you. My lowly diggings have the advantage of being close at hand. By the way, in one respect they are the opposite of lowly—they are on the third floor. Do honour me by accepting their shelter."

Frank could not well persist in refusing. The offer was kindly made. There was no obtrusive, pride-wounding sympathy in Mr. Carson's even, agreeable voice. He spoke as if begging a favour. Frank was deeply touched. Kindness from an almost entire stranger at that moment, when his feelings were sore and smarting from the desertion of his friends, could not fail to affect him.

"I will come with pleasure," he said; "if you are sure it will not put you out at all."

"Not in the slightest degree," Mr. Carson assured him. "And the sooner we get home the better. This gentle rain is very insinuating."

After a walk of a very few minutes they arrived at Mr. Carson's abode—one of a row of old houses which, fifty or sixty years ago, had been aristocratic mansions. A latch-key admitted them. A candle was found on the hall-table; then three flights of stairs, and they were in Mr. Carson's rooms.

The host proceeded immediately to make his guest comfortable. He lighted the fire in the small, unpretentious, but cosy sitting-room, and put on a little tin kettle; made Frank take off his coat, which was very damp, and don a dressing-gown, and placed him near the fire.

"You are strangely good to me," remarked Frank, gratefully.

"Good!" replied Mr. Carson, busy preparing the coffee-pot, and taking a decanter of spirits from the cupboard. "Nothing of the kind! A little strange, perhaps. You see, Dewar, I have lived much alone. My mother died when I was quite a youngster, and I

was left without money, relations or friends. I was brought up to the stage, and have fought my way upwards until I now hold a first-rate position, considering my age: and I am not so much your senior as you might suppose. But the world has an ageing effect, and I have lived in the world all my life."

"I cannot understand your interest in me," said Frank.

"You love your mother," replied Mr. Carson, after a somewhat lengthy pause. "When you sang that last ballad I was sitting in the shadow by the piano, and saw your emotion; although," he hastened to add, as he saw the young man start uneasily, "no one else did. And I love, I worship my mother's memory. That should establish a bond of sympathy between us. Then, too, you are beginning your fight with the world and fortune; the same fight that I have had, and am still in the thick of. If we are not equal to throwing a look or word of sympathy to a companion in the conflict, heaven pity us. But the kettle's boiling," he cried, suddenly breaking off. "Now I want you to have a cup of coffee before you turn in."

Frank gratefully accepted and drank the refreshment offered him. But he was now very weary. Mr. Carson's watchful eye saw that he could scarce hold his head up.

"You're sleepy, I see," he said. "I'm glad I'm not, for I must sit up now until rehearsal at 11 o'clock this morning, studying a new part. You must turn into my bedroom and do the sleeping for me."

"No, indeed," cried Frank, starting into wakefulness. "I couldn't think of such a thing as depriving you of your bed. If you will allow me to dose in this chair, or ——"

"My dear fellow," interrupted Carson, "you are too sleepy to be logical. Why should the bed—small, but not uncomfortable—in the next room remain unoccupied, when there is a man in this room half dead with fatigue. I must sit up and study this part. If you don't use the bed no one will. There; take this candle, and be off with you. We'll have a chat to-morrow. Good-night, and pleasant dreams!"

Frank shook his host's hand silently, but the silence was more eloquent than speech.

As he stretched his weary limbs under the bed-clothes he thought of his mother, and of his newly-found friend. He remembered the good and forgot the evil, and in a few moments he slept.

Left alone, Mr. Carson sat gazing dreamily into the fire. He had nothing to study. He knew his part in the play that was to be rehearsed that day, perfectly.

The fire glowed upon a comely face, old beyond the years it had seen, but attractive even in its seriousness. There was something in it that said "I have endured;" there was earnestness and power too, and more than the most thoughtful observer could read in a casual glance.

"Frank Dewar," murmured Mr. Carson, thoughtfully. "Strange

that I should have taken a fancy to a Dewar. I dare say the name is common enough, though. He's a nice boy, and I believe there is good in him. He may do good for himself and the world—depends, I should think, upon how the world treats him, for he's proud and headstrong, and wants ballast, I fancy. I wonder now what made him leave home."

And still wondering, Mr. Carson dozed off into dreamland.

When Frank woke from the deep, refreshing sleep which had kindly visited him, he was startled to see, by a little carriage clock upon the dressing-table, that it was exactly midday. Springing out of bed, he began to dress; and then he lighted upon a little note which was stuck in the looking-glass. It said:

"DEAR DEWAR,—I shall run off to rehearsal and leave you to sleep it out. I shall return about two. In the meantime make yourself as happy as you can. Summon breakfast, about which I have left orders, by pulling the bell at the sitting-room fireplace. Books, writing materials, &c., are in the sitting-room. In fine make the best of the den till I return. Then we will chat.

Yours, JOHN CARSON."

"John Carson is like one of the genii we read of in fairy tales," soliloquised Frank, warmly. "As good as he is mysterious. Strange that one finds good where it is least expected. Carson is a million times the superior of the fellows I called my friends; and yet I never thought his acquaintance worth cultivating. What is the old cynical proverb? 'Go to strangers for charity, to friends for advice, and to relations for nothing.'"

In an hour he had bathed, dressed and breakfasted, and then he spent the time until his host returned in looking out on the square, and trying to plan out his future.

"Well," said Carson, as he entered the room: "how do you find yourself? I hope you haven't been very dull, caged up here alone."

"Indeed, I've not, for I've been thinking of your kindness," replied Frank, gracefully. "And I should like to try and thank you before I go."

"Kindness! Nonsense. But why talk of going so soon."

"Well, I mustn't repeat last night's mistake. You know I must find lodgings; and in any case I don't wish to take advantage of your good nature by lingering here."

"I've thought of rooms for you," replied Mr. Carson. "And if you don't require anything particularly luxurious you might be suited in this house."

"On the contrary; I want something particularly cheap. Until I can earn a little money by writing, which I hope to be able to do, I must live as inexpensively as a Chinaman, for I have only three or four pounds in the world," acknowledged Frank, candidly.

"Then the room overhead will suit you admirably. It is very small, and very elevated; but it is neat and light, and has a pleasant outlook—just the very roost for an embryo author. By the way, if your genius leans in that direction, I may be of use to you, in the way of finding a market for your work. And in return I will ask a favour of you. It is that you will use this sitting-room with me."

"But," interrupted Frank, colouring, "I ——"

"It is a selfish request," pursued Mr. Carson, seriously. "I find the hours I spend at home very lonely sometimes. A chum to exchange thoughts and ideas with would brighten them immensely. If you grant me this favour, I in return, will teach you the first principles of bachelor economy. There; let us consider that point as settled. Now you had better be presented to that garrulous autocrat, the landlady."

The afternoon was spent in carrying out these arrangements—a servant being sent to the club for Frank's portmanteau—and the evening, after dinner, in discussing the young man's prospects and reading the small literary efforts he had brought with him from home. These latter, like the first-fruits of many authors, were better in expression than in substance, and Mr. Carson held that to be a promising sign.

Frank's work was unaffected and bright, pointed and direct. Whether expressing humour or sentiment, the manner was equally happy, although, truth to tell, the matter was often stale and unprofitable. Mr. Carson, who, though a kindly, was an honest critic, pointed this out, but justly ascribed it to youth and inexperience.

"You will do," he said, "when you have learned a little more of life. If you have patience and perseverance, I firmly believe that, when you know as much of the world as I do, you will make your mark as an author."

Frank set to his work with perseverance and determination. He wrote for several hours daily, and, although he experienced the usual hopes, fears and disappointments of the young author, he did not permit them to seriously affect his spirits or his industry.

His manuscripts came back, and he grew somewhat nervous of the postman's knock; but the work was immediately sent off again elsewhere, and more was written.

At last there came to him his first success; and he experienced in their proper order that trio of blissful circumstances and sensations which no author, no matter to what eminence be may subsequently rise, can ever entirely forget.

In his first good fortune, as in his trouble, he had only two sympathetic friends; but as their sincerity was unimpeachable, they were a host in themselves. They were Mr. Carson and his mother. Within a few days of leaving home he had redeemed the promise he had made his mother—that he would contrive to see her soon. One

evening, after a hard day's work, he walked up to Hampstead. His intention was to go to the back of the house, and entrust one of the servants with a secret message to his mother; but as he walked softly through the garden he noticed that the blinds of the room in which they were accustomed to pass the evening were not down. Looking in, he saw his father and mother occupied as usual, the first with the *Times*, and the latter with a piece of embroidery. Stepping back into the darkness among the shrubs, Frank softly whistled the air of his favourite song. He saw his mother look up at once, glance at the window, then at her husband, and then resume her work. But presently she rose, laid her work down, and with apparent unconcern walked from the room. In a few moments he heard her voice, eager but subdued, in the garden. "Frank; are you there?" Another moment and he was in her arms.

They had but a few minutes together, for Mrs. Dewar feared that her husband would miss her and suspect the meeting; but Frank had time to tell his story, omitting the unpleasant and dwelling only on the brighter details—his work, his hopes of success, his new friend, and the comfort of his lodging. In return, Mrs. Dewar could only tell him that his father was more irritable than ever, and that she had been forbidden to hold any communication with her banished son.

Soon they were obliged to part, and when she hurried away Frank found that his mother had left a little money in his hand. Remembering his father's illiberality, he knew how she must have scraped and saved to secure it for him.

After that Frank saw his mother once every week—sometimes in the afternoon when she was alone, and sometimes in the evening. He wrote often to her, too, posting his letters in the morning early so that she would receive them when his father was absent; and he had the proud satisfaction of sending her his first printed work, and of afterwards listening to her warm praises thereof.

One afternoon Mr. Carson and Frank were out walking together, when the former, who was unusually preoccupied and sad, proposed a visit to Brompton Cemetery.

"If you would care to," he said, "we will go to my mother's grave. I go very frequently, but hitherto always alone. I should like to take you, however, because there is so much sympathy between us. We are now almost brothers—almost brothers."

And then, as they walked on, Mr. Carson talked, as people in sadness are apt to do, with more personal confidence than he had ever done before. He spoke of his mother, and told Frank how just before his birth she had abandoned the stage, which various family circumstances led her to adopt, and by so doing sacrificed a career which had been full of great promise: and he conveyed the impression that her short life had been full of trouble, and her death a happy release.

It was a simple gravestone that they stood before, after half-an-hour's walk—simple and unpretending. Indeed it seemed to shrink

from observation behind the larger and handsomer monuments which half surrounded it. It bore this plain inscription:

Sacred to the Memory of
Rose Carson.
Aged 32.

As the two young men stood, talking slowly in subdued tones, a man appeared before them, so suddenly that he seemed to start up from the ground.

It was Mr. Dewar, his face pale, and his hands trembling.

"What do you here?" he asked, addressing Frank with mingled anger and agitation.

"Father!" ejaculated Frank, retreating a step in surprise at the unexpectedness of the meeting.

"What do you here?" demanded Mr. Dewar again, in the same voice.

The reply came from Carson. He too had grown pale, and he stood looking strangely at Frank's father.

"He came with me," he said quietly. "I brought him here."

Mr. Dewar's eyes turned to Carson's face, and fastened there—dilated, inquiring, and wild—as if they would never leave it.

"And you?" he asked; "why have you come?"

"To visit my mother's grave."

The two men stood looking at each other in silence for a few moments, with faces paler than before—their very lips were white. Something strange was working in each man's breast.

"Your mother? Which ——"

Carson, without moving his eyes, pointed to the little gravestone.

Mr. Dewar shook visibly.

"And—your father?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper, and as if impelled by an unseen power.

"His name," replied Carson, slowly, "was Henry Carson."

Mr. Dewar staggered as though he had received a blow; but as the two young men stepped forward to his assistance he waved them off with one hand, with the other grasping for support the high railings round an adjacent grave. Then he appeared to recover himself somewhat, and, with bowed head and short unsteady steps, he walked away, and out of their sight.

"What does it mean, Carson?" asked Frank, wonderingly, and not quite grasping the truth.

"It means strange things," replied his friend, passing his hand over his eyes. "It means, Frank, that I was nearer the truth than I imagined when I said, as we came along, that we are 'almost brothers.'"

IV.

A heavy hand was laid upon John Dewar. Twenty-four hours after the scene at Rose Carson's grave, he was stricken down with brain

fever, and for several weeks he lay tossing in delirium and hovering between life and death. The doctors shook their heads and looked grave. It was evident, they said, that their patient had been overburdened with mental distress for some considerable time. He was at an age, too, when men of fine constitution, who have lived too freely in their youth, apparently with impunity, frequently collapse with terrible suddenness. Nature demands her revenge at last, and the forfeit must be paid. They found that their patient's heart was weak, and that his lungs were none too sound; and Mrs. Dewar was gently told to be prepared for the worst. Under these circumstances Frank, of course, spent the greater portion of his time at home. His brother was travelling with his wife abroad, and, his present address being unknown, it was impossible to summon him.

It was to Frank alone that Mrs. Dewar could turn, in this terrible crisis, for sympathy, help and advice. She nursed her husband incessantly, untiringly, and with unspeakable patience and tenderness. A true woman's nature is very beautiful. In an hour of suffering she will forget twenty years of unkindness.

Frank was for sometime troubled in his mind as to whether he should mention to his mother the scene in the graveyard and the discoveries it had led to; but Carson, whom he consulted, decided for him.

"Say nothing," was his advice, "Remember that the secret is not your own."

"When Mr. Dewar at last awoke to consciousness, his weakness was pitiable to behold, and there were still no hopes of his recovery. But the family constitution, although not robust, was remarkably wiry, and to the surprise of all Mr. Dewar by slow and almost imperceptible degrees began to mend; but it was only too apparent that he could never recover his former health and strength—that he would remain an invalid for the rest of his days.

"Your constitution must be marvellous, Dewar," remarked the family doctor, standing one day at his bedside. "I don't know another man who could have come through that tussle as you have. It was the brain I feared most. You have been making too severe calls upon it—asking it to carry too much. A heavy weight upon it, eh? Have you been carrying it alone?"

The invalid nodded weakly.

"Then, my friend, you've been acting the fool," said the shrewd old doctor, bluntly, "and it has nearly cost you your life. Such burdens must be shared; then they grow lighter, and perhaps disappear altogether. You need not look far for one to confide in. Do you know who has been mainly instrumental in pulling you through this business? Your wife, sir, who has nursed you day and night, and whose tender care, under Providence, has won you back to life. Now take this advice, which is the best I have ever given you, and which has the additional advantage of being gratis: No matter what

the trouble is, tell your wife. You will be astonished how much better you will feel after it."

"Tell your wife." The words rang in Mr. Dewar's ears after the doctor had gone, and opened up a train of thought entirely new to him. "Tell his wife?" Such a proposition had never been made to him before; never had such an idea occurred to his mind. Before his illness he would have dismissed it as impossible and useless; but he was now weak and softened, and no longer strong to bear alone. "Tell your wife." Over and over again the words repeated themselves in his brain. He tried to banish them. He told himself that it was too late; that it could bring no peace; that it would only magnify the trouble, and be cruel to her. (Strange, John Dewar, that you are now considering your wife's feelings.) But the words refused to be banished. The idea had fastened upon him, and, unconsciously, it fascinated him.

When his wife came into the room shortly afterwards, his great hollow eyes followed her strangely, and she was quick to notice and wonder at it. Twice, by an uncontrollable impulse, he called her; but when she came his weak courage failed, and he made some slight requests instead. He had grown wonderfully observant, however; and he detected the tenderness in her voice; he saw the sympathy in her soft brown eyes; and he felt the grateful gentleness of her touch as she arranged the pillows.

For fully a week Mr. Dewar's mind was disturbed by the doctor's advice. He longed to put it to the practice, but his courage was still weak. One day, however, he called her to his bedside, by an impulse which was backed by some resolution. Quickly she came, but he was silent.

"What is it, John?"

He was still silent for a few moments, and then, gathering courage, but not looking at her, he said:

"You are very good, Mary."

The voice was low, and the words were spoken a little awkwardly; but the wife heard them, and trembled with a multitude of emotions. For nearly a quarter of a century she had not heard such grateful, affectionate words from her husband's lips, and it is not wonderful that, hearing them all suddenly now, she could find no reply; but, gliding swiftly away out of his sight, she stood at the window, struggling with her tears.

For several minutes Mr. Dewar was uncertain as to the effect his words had produced; but all his uneasy doubts were dispelled when, returning to the bedside, his wife took the poor wasted white hand which lay upon the coverlet, kissed it gently, and retained it in her own. In that moment John Dewar knew that the much that was to be forgiven him was forgiven freely.

She sat by his side, still holding his hand, silent, but very happy. After a while, he told her his story, bravely and truly, although his voice

was unsteady and he looked away from her. It required some courage to make that confession ; but Mr. Dewar did not spare himself.

He began by telling her, in a few words, of the wildness of his youth ; and then he proceeded at once to reveal the nature of the heartless sin which he had committed in the name of virtue, and for which he had suffered half a lifetime of remorse.

He spoke of his sister—that only sister, the mention of whose name he had ever hitherto avoided—the gentle girl whose natural and only protector he had been, through the early death of their parents. Through all his most desperate wildness, the knowledge of which he had studiously kept from her, he loved her deeply. At nineteen she was beautiful, innocent and impressionable, and it was then that she met and returned the love of Henry Carson, the actor. The brother was furious, and he stoutly forbade the lovers to meet. The inevitable result followed. There was an elopement, and a secret marriage. He swore never to willingly look upon her face again. The letters which came addressed in her handwriting were promptly thrown into the fire, unopened. Afterwards he heard that Henry Carson was dying of consumption, and that his sister was appearing on the stage. Still he kept his oath. After that he heard of the actor's death ; and, a year later, there came a letter which, as it was not in his sister's handwriting, he opened. It was from Rose, but written by her landlady. Would he come to her? She was in great distress and dying, and she had a child who would need a friend. No ; he would not go to her. He had cast her off, and all belonging to her, for ever. He would keep his oath. Then in the years that followed, remorse had crept into his heart.

For years he had tried vainly to forget that chapter in his life : but the voice of remorse refused to be silenced, and lately it had grown so loud that he had been impelled to inquire of her fate. Then he had learned of her death, and after much difficulty he had found her burial-place.

Mr. Dewar stopped here. In his self-abasement he wondered that his wife still sat by him and still held his hand. He was afraid to look at her, lest he should see horror and disgust in her face. But suddenly he felt a warm tear on his hand, and glancing at her he saw that she was weeping silently.

"How you must loathe me," he said.

"Indeed, John, I pity you so much—and her." Then, after a pause, she went on : "You must have suffered terribly all these years. Oh, had I but known, how much more patient and considerate I might have been!"

"Mary, don't speak so!" cried her husband. "You've been an angel to me, and I in return have made your life a miserable burden. I have driven your boy away."

"Hush, dear!" she said, rising and kissing his forehead. "It is all forgotten. We have been married anew to-day."

Then there was another silence, and Mr. Dewar, lying still, with moist eyes, marvelled greatly that he could have been so long blind to the blessing that lay ever within his grasp—that he could have dwelt miserably in the past, when the poignancy of recollection might have been soothed by the priceless blessings of a woman's love, sympathy and forgiveness.

The mother's instinct impelled Mrs. Dewar to ask one question.

"What of the child, John?" she inquired, gently.

Then he told her how his inquiries had failed to elicit any information on that subject, and of the strange meeting and discovery in the cemetery.

Mrs. Dewar became very agitated.

"It is the same!" she exclaimed, with much emotion. "He is Frank's friend: he has been very good to him. John, you must see this young man. It is *his* forgiveness that you must seek. After that, we will all forget the past."

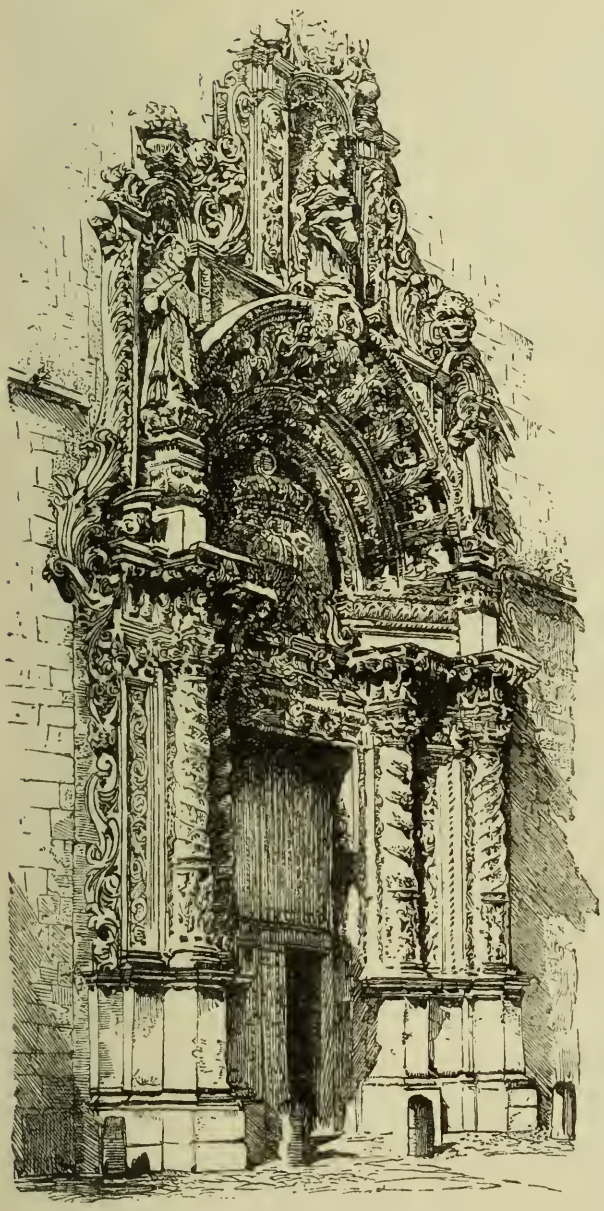
John Carson's forgiveness was not hard to obtain. On the following day he was closeted with the sick man for an hour, and when they parted there was no bitterness in either man's heart.

Frank and Carson, who still live together, and are making steady progress in their respective professions, often run down for a few days to Ilfracombe, whither Mr. and Mrs. Dewar have moved, by the doctor's advice. John Dewar is a confirmed invalid, and his days cannot be long; but what he has lost in health and strength, he has gained in peace and happiness. He has gained, too, in breadth of sympathy. Affliction, in his case, has cleared the moral vision. So great a failure himself, he has grown to look with more charity upon the failings of others. In a word, he has caught, for the first time, a little of the true spirit of the teaching of that great Master whom he has so long professed to follow—Who hated the sin, but loved the sinner—the golden spirit of forbearance, tolerance, and eternal love.

His temper is still imperfect: he is especially irritable when his wife is away from him, even for an hour. But when she is with him, his eyes rest upon her with the contentment of a child; and to himself he often murmurs thankfully: "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S. Author of "Through Holland," "Under Northern Skies," etc., etc.



Jesuits' College, Palma.

Palma, Dec., 1886.

My Dear E.—I take up my pen sadly. The hour of departure sounds; if not actually, at least very loudly in anticipation. As I said before, and as someone has said long before me, les jours se suivent. All that's bright must fade. The longest and happiest day comes to an end.

But I am especially sorry that our sojourn in this beautiful island is fast closing. We have had many weeks of perfect happiness and contentment, as far as that is possible in this world. Weeks, too, of absolute retirement, which has not been our least charm. During the whole of this time we have to all intents and purposes — H. C. and I — been thrown upon each other for society and companionship, yet we have not grown tired of each other, or fallen out; we have not taken to the dogs' delight of barking and biting, or come to the fate I feared for A. and H. C., that of the Kilkenny cats.

On the contrary, H. C. declares that he shall return to England

with a heart of lead, and calmly asks whether we could not pass our lives in roaming the world together. He also this morning indited a very pretty sonnet, of which I am hero and inspirer. He calls it *David and Jonathan:* has been good enough to despatch me to the land of ghosts and shadows, and illustrated his meaning with a graphic sketch. I am in the far, far distance, partially concealed behind a thin veil of cloud, chief amidst a company of angels. My wings are outspread. Their shadow falls upon the head of a young monk, kneeling in ecstasy, with cowl thrown back. The young monk is H. C. His eyes are strained upon that far-off vision. Beneath him run the words, which I think are not quite original: "Though lost to sight, to memory dear!"

This is flattering. Say what you will, hero worship is a very pleasant thing and sweetens life. I certainly asked H. C. if he could not as comfortably have despatched himself, and left me to a cloistered grief; but he mildly replied that he had great faith in his own powers of constancy.

But now to return for a moment to Soller, the time and scene of my last letter.

After finishing that humorous sketch, of which Rosita is the ministering spirit and I am the ministered, A. is the slain and H. C. is the victor: after consuming those six bottles of soda water: he retired to rest, and no doubt slept the sleep of the just. The next morning, on comparing notes, we found we had both great trouble in rising. For my own part, I felt as though I had no sound spot in my whole body; bruised and wounded from head to foot, black and blue, yea, all the colours of the rainbow. This of course was the effect of the Puig Major, and I wished the Puig Major had been at Jericho before I had attempted the ascent.

We came down to breakfast in due time; or rather, for us, who generally rise with the birds of the air, in time that was very much overdue. A. and B. were still invisible. They appeared upon the scene of our little world about midday, pretending that they were in excellent form for another excursion up the Puig Major.

Rosita ministered at our breakfast, daintily prepared us pomegranates, and in spite of H. C.'s furious glances, gave me the largest share, and bestowed most pains upon my Mallorquin pronunciation. It certainly was very soft and sweet as it issued from her pretty lips. A. was fortunately still slumbering, or I should probably not be living now to tell the tale. The chocolate mill was grinding away, not dead men's bones, but sugar and flakes and all the ingredients that make up this delectable compound. It sent forth a suffocating odour, from which we were glad to escape to the lower regions. How we pitied that poor mule, who thus passes its life, like Sisyphus, in rolling a stone which goes on for ever!

After breakfast—it was a lengthened meal, for Rosita evidently wished that her final lesson in Mallorquin should be a memorable

one—we sauntered forth for a last look round Soller, armed with our camera.

It appeared more ancient and picturesque than ever, and the inhabitants, who were now growing accustomed to our distinguished appearance—familiarity in this, as in all other things, breeds contempt—stared less curiously as we walked the streets.

Through open doors and windows we saw the usual signs of daily domestic life going on. We heard the whirr of the loom, the flash of the weaver's shuttle: sounds that to me, for some mysterious reason, bear always a peculiar and a melancholy charm. I fancy that I must unconsciously have been subjected to the influence in childhood. Though heard but once at that impressionable age, it would be sufficient to leave behind its effect for ever. For I never hear it now but I am taken back to those early days when the world was fair and bright and innocent, and there was a sure and sweet refuge in all childish troubles. Alas! the day comes when we have greater troubles to bear and less innocence; and each has to live his life locked up in his own heart, in reality as solitary and alone as if he had outlived his fellows.

Forgive me for moralising. I began by telling you that I took up my pen sadly. All last things must be sad; especially if they have been happy: and I scarcely know which I have enjoyed most: actually going through the scenes of our daily life upon this little island, or living over again our experiences in my letters to you. To me the one has been as vivid and pleasant a reality as the other.

As we walked about Soller, we marvelled more than ever at the picturesque old place. Everywhere there were lights and shades. The blue sky was deep and clear above the houses. Overhanging eaves cast their shadows upon the walls. H. C. was in raptures. We took photographs, and small quick sketches of ancient windows and curious doorways. Then we stood on one of the bridges and were lost in the wonderful old-world scene, which in this respect can have few rivals.

Yet there is a certain sadness and depression about the place. Surrounded by those mountains, as I have said, it is enervating. Many of the people look pale and sickly, with very little energy or vigour about them—like the soft and liquid tones of their language. They seem to endure life rather than enjoy it. But I daresay they enjoy it after their manner and according to their lights. What people never have, have never had, that, as a rule, they do not miss. It is given to few to realise very vividly any other than the actual and present state of existence, whatever it may be.

At last we returned to the fonda. We had taken photographs of Mariquita and Rosita, separately and together, in a romantic background of vine-leaves and pantiles and brilliant blossoms. H. C. has made a sketch of the two girls, which I enclose to you,* but it is

* It was given in the last Number of the ARGOSY.

difficult in a mere sketch to do justice to them. You catch the outlines tolerably, but the charm of life is wanting. You cannot see the soft brown eyes as they beam and grow tender when gazing upon H. C. or upon A.; and you cannot hear the liquid accents of voices that to us are certainly sweet and low.

Well, the old mother was so charmed with the result of her daughters' photos, that nothing would please her but she also must be taken. For our part, with less admiration for the subject, we were only too ready to oblige the old lady; for she is really a very nice and good old woman, who has done her best for us: and, as I have already remarked, does not appear to have had too much happiness in life, if one may judge from her expression.

She promised to be ready by twelve o'clock—the time at which our lordly barouche was due.

We returned as the clock struck the hour. The old lady was in her best. Rustling black silk, heavy gold chain and earrings, a white lace head-dress of the peculiar and unbecoming fashion of the country: all finished off and completed by the inevitable fan appointment. That was the only thing I quarrelled with. She could not hold it gracefully. The fingers were too thick and clumsy for their office: for the old lady has grown to embonpoint with the passing years. She saw this herself, and tried to dispose becomingly of hands and fingers, but it wouldn't do. She gave up the attempt and went back to her usual look of half-fretful resignation.

She, too, was taken amidst the vine leaves and the pantiles; and if the surroundings had lost a little of their beauty and romance, it was nothing more than was to be expected. The decline of autumn can never to my thinking equal the freshness of early spring.

There was no time to develop the photo and see the result, and so we brought it away with us to be developed in Palma. It is certainly not so satisfactory as those of the girls. Whether the sky was too clouded, or the exposure incorrect, I know not; but whilst the girls came out full of life and vigour, the old lady, though perfectly distinct, appears pale and faded. She looks more like one of those shadows to whose realms she is hastening.

From this point of view it is a success: to her daughters the land of shadows seems afar off; to her it is becoming a reality. But I have an idea that the old lady had no wish to point a moral or adorn a tale of this sort, and that she will not be at all satisfied with the result. And I am sorry, for we had a great wish to please her. However, she will have to take the will for the deed. Our intentions were honourable.

Twelve o'clock had now long struck, and still our lordly barouche had not put in an appearance. I told you in my last of a presentiment that something would happen. Some people are always having presentiments, and they never come true. It is not so with me. I once had a presentiment that a rich relative from whom I had great

expectations would leave me out of his will altogether. I was quite right. Since then I have firmly believed in presentiments; that is, in my own; I have not much faith in other people's.

We were concerned at the absence of the barouche; and when one o'clock vibrated upon the air, we grew alarmed. We were anxious to get back to Palma. It was necessary that we should do so, if our plans were not to be altogether set aside. Moreover, if it did not turn up to-day, why should it do so to-morrow? and so on, ad infinitum. There was no telegraph to Palma—another sign of the sleepiness and inactivity of the little island of Mallorca. These were our last days in the island, and we wanted to spend them specially in Palma. There was so much in the town we still wanted to do and see and sketch and photograph. We also wanted to become more intimate with it than we were: to have it well enshrined in our minds and memories: to grow familiar with it: a familiarity that should breed, not contempt, but love. In truth it is very easy to fall in love with Palma: it is a fair setting to its fair women. You have heard of the latter, and know how they have affected H. C.'s peace of mind. He has all the susceptibility of the poetic temperament. I don't mean a mere ordinary poet, which is as common as the fishes of the sea, but a genius of the highest order: who might have headed the list of immortals, if Shakespeare had not lived before him.

As I have said, we grew alarmed when one o'clock boomed forth, and the moments flew by, and still no signs of a barouche, not even any symptom of dust on the distant road, such as poor Sister Anne saw from her tower when watching for a deliverer for Bluebeard's wife. There is so much unconscious pathos and despair in that one bit of the story. "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anybody coming?" "Alas, Sister, I see only the dust from a flock of sheep."

Matters, too, were growing critical between H. C. and A. The latter, on descending at twelve o'clock, had assumed the brow of Erebus, on finding H. C. in suspiciously close contact with Rosita. The truth is she was sewing a button on to his collar, as he had lost his stud; but A. couldn't see that. I must say it served him right for creeping down in slippers to surprise the enemy. Yet I sympathise with him; H. C. is, after all, an interloper. A. seemed to think that H. C. had somehow stolen a march upon him, by being up three or four hours in the day earlier than himself. He was not aware that we had spent most of the time in patrolling about Soller, taking sketches and photos, and dreaming delicious day dreams born of this quaint old town.

The old lady was just then ready to be photographed, and, to divert his attention from the industrious Rosita and the Elysianed (why not coin an adjective?) H. C., I proposed that he should offer her his arm up the road to the romantic vine-leaved, pantiled bower: our scene of action. Upon which I thought he would have taken me up bodily and hurled me into the midst of that horrible, grinding, rolling machine, where I should have been smothered with chocolate, and soon have

found myself reduced to something less than a state of cremation. I trembled, and hurried off Madame Pastor—but did not offer her the support of my arm.

Presently we all met at the festive midday board, which is only another way of saying that we all sat down to luncheon. H. C. and A. had previously shaken hands in token of good fellowship before breaking bread and taking salt together. I was glad that they should be reconciled at the last. Our immediate topic was naturally the absence of the lordly barouche. There was absolutely no conveyance to be hired in Soller beyond a market cart, which by dint of great efforts might have landed us in Palma in twelve or eighteen hours.

AN OLIVE YARD.

"It will come," remarked A., who as usual looked on the bright side of life.

"So you said yesterday of the sun," sarcastically observed H.C. "But it didn't come; and the lordly barouche won't come either."

"Perhaps there is a fatality about the midday hour in Soller, just as in other parts of the world it is supposed to attend that of midnight," I ventured to suggest. "The sun was to appear at twelve yesterday, the barouche at twelve to day; both failed. Could we not work this up into a sort of rule-of-three problem, and find the answer?"

"I will find you an answer at once," laughed A. "Result: stay on here, and go up the Puig Major again to-morrow."

"Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!" cried H. C. "I

have no wish to lose my companion, and return to England in charge of the departed."

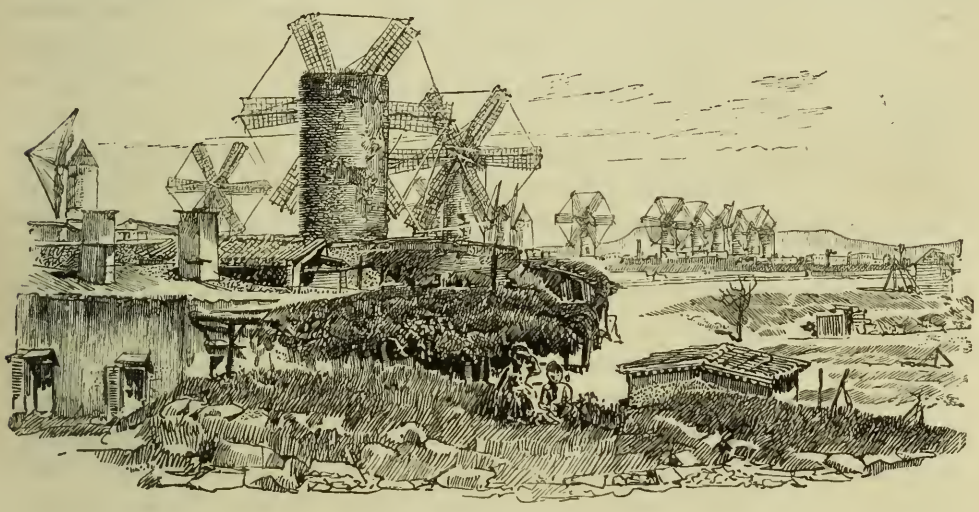
"Then if you must go," said A.; "if it is so absolutely necessary, why not take the diligence?"

"Diligence!" I cried. "This is the first I have heard of any luxury of the sort. When does it start, and from where?"

"At two o'clock, six doors down the road," replied A. "It is now half-past one."

This was really good news. We jumped up at once. H.C. declared he would go and pack—he is really the best packer in the world, whilst I am the worst—and I volunteered to secure places.

"Don't suppose there will be any, at this twelfth hour," said A. wickedly. "Shouldn't have suggested it if I had thought there would be room inside—and they don't allow you to sit on the cabbages and



PALMA WINDMILLS.

cauliflowers on the roof. Don't want you to go. Bent on another excursion up the Puig Major."

But, as it turned out, there was room and to spare. In less than no time we were packed up, the bill was paid, and we were ready to start. There was the usual crowd in attendance upon the diligence; a conveyance as hard and hot and uncomfortable as ingenuity could possibly have made it. But we were glad even of this—so does the mind yield to circumstances, the back fit itself to the burden.

It was a real burden in this instance. The interior was empty. We entered and took our seats. Two women followed us almost immediately: a stout lady with a market basket, and another stout lady with a market umbrella. The basket nearly fractured my ribs, the usual thing in a diligence; the umbrella was firmly planted upon H. C.'s favourite toe. He literally howled with agony; it was as bad as that bygone scene with the prickly pears. Upon which the odious woman viciously removed her umbrella to his other foot, and then

looked down and seemed surprised to find that Englishmen were possessed of feet just as much as the people of other tongues and nations. No, not quite so much; at any rate, amongst the privileged. H. C. and I pride ourselves with justice upon the perfection of our feet and ankles. A clumsy foot in a man is bad; in a woman it is simply revolting.

But this is a digression, though as we are on the matter of feet, perhaps we may be allowed for a moment to wander from our subject, and run off at a tangent. Revenons à nos moutons.

There was very much more of the elephant than the sheep in our travelling companions. The interior is made to hold six, but most mercifully no one else volunteered as a passenger. A. and B., of course, saw us off, or as A. put it with great unction: "Came to see the last of us." A.'s eyes gleamed wickedly as they took in the quartette of the interior. "Don't be making love to the lady with the umbrella," he cried maliciously to H. C. "Breach of promises are very common in Palma, and in this instance damages would be heavy."

H. C. ground his teeth as he felt that he was deserting the camp and leaving the field to the enemy, but he made no other answer. Then the door was slammed by the coachman, who mounted to his seat, and the ponderous, surcharged vehicle moved off.

Farewell to Soller. And how sorry we were to leave it. Another week here could have been spent with the greatest pleasure and profit. Revelling in the old town, its wonderfully ancient appearance, here and there bordering upon the ruinous; its narrow streets, with overhanging eaves, and strongly-marked lights and shadows. Wandering amidst the orange groves, almost overpowered by their delicious scent, and made so welcome to the golden fruits by their owners. Becoming more familiar with the beautiful little port, and paddling our own canoe — or someone else's — as we became acquainted with the outlines and aspect of the surrounding coast. But on these occasions Time throws off his leaden feet and spreads his wings, and the end comes before we are aware of it, and we find that a great deal that we meant to do has to be placed to the account of Good Intentions.

It was a long and most uncomfortable journey in that diligence. I never wish to enter another. The ladies, fortunately, were not much trouble. She of the basket fell fast asleep, and passed the hours in a sweet oblivion denied to us. She of the umbrella evidently became enamoured of H. C., made languishing eyes at him, wreathed her very round and rosy countenance in seductive smiles, adjusted her shawl more coquettishly, and when she found all this of no avail, this deceitful Delilah took off her shawl and put on a scarf. But it was all of no use, and I thought H. C. in his rage would have seized her umbrella and administered a castigation. Then she, too, fell asleep, and we were left to peace, though not to repose.

The first portion of the journey was very slowly performed. We had that tremendous ascent to climb which raises us above the world, and enables us to look down upon Soller, as upon a little town lying in the hollow of the mountains. The diligence took it very leisurely. I think we were quite two hours reaching the summit. We walked the greater part of the way, taking short cuts up the hillsides through orange and lemon groves, and soon finding ourselves far ahead of the old perambulating bathing machine. I do not know a better name for it.

Then there was the descent on the other side, which was taken almost as slowly. Here we were in the midst of grand mountains, luxuriant and laughing, bearing in abundance all the fruit of the earth. It is a wonderfully rich valley. In the distance we looked upon Palma, opening up between the chains of hills, reposing in its great plain, with the shimmering sapphire sea beyond. There was our goal, but when should we reach it?

At the half-way house we stayed an age. The women alighted for a time, and the vehicle groaned and creaked its relief. Then they drank something out of a bottle, and ate something that afterwards we found must have been strongly flavoured with garlic. We anathematised the landlord of the Fonda de Mallorca, who had subjected us to this nuisance, and almost hoped to find the lordly barouche had been swallowed up by an earthquake.

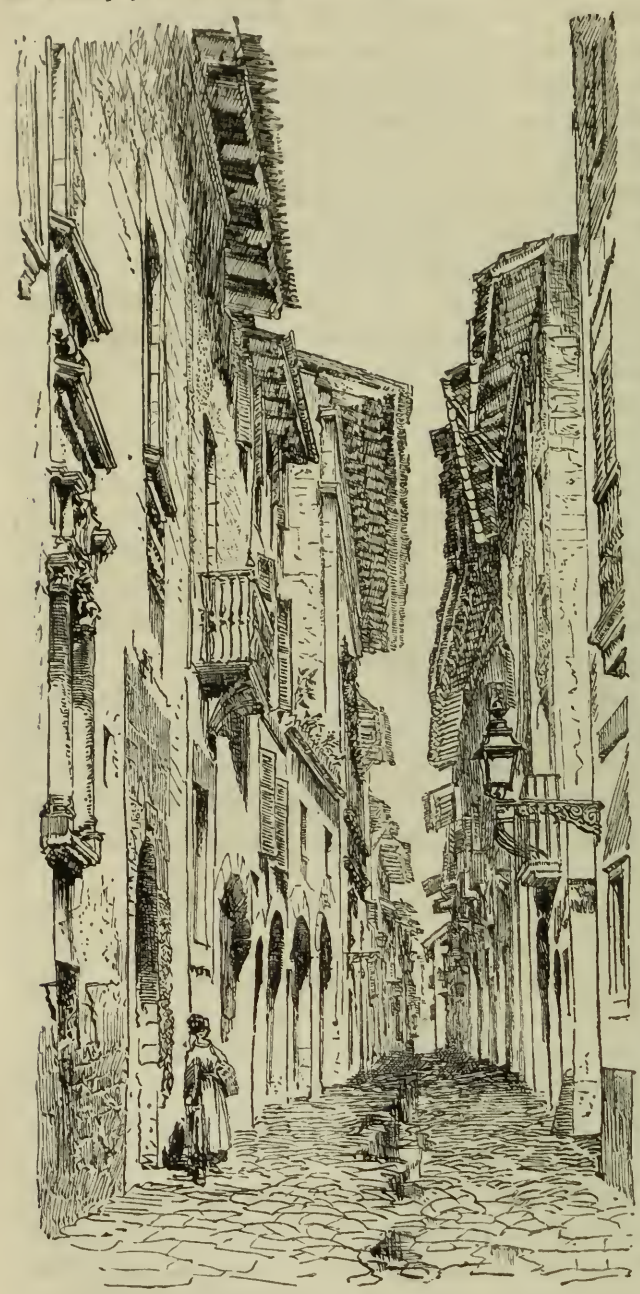
When we started off again at a snail's gallop from the half-way house, deceitful Delilah had transferred her wiles and her substantial charms to the driver, and mounted beside him on the box: where, no longer having H. C.'s feet to practise upon, she turned the force of her umbrella upon the unhappy horses and prodded them into something like a paralysed vitality.

In spite of that, it was dark long before we reached Palma. But at length the railway station loomed up, and then we were stopped outside the gates by the customs, who searched diligently to see that we had nothing to eat and drink smuggled about us. Save the mark! We were damp with a heavy dew; exhausted from hours of torture in this antiquated infernal machine; famished enough to have eaten up a boiled beggar-woman, and in a state of nerves bordering on phrenzy.

No, there was nothing to eat anywhere; not even chopped hay for the horses; so we were allowed to proceed. A singular proceeding it was. We rumbled through the gateway, and a minute after, the machine stopped; we were politely ordered to get out; our traps, precious camera and all, were coolly deposited in the middle of the road, and there we were left; homeless, ragged and tanned.

I never felt more cast adrift. We had not the slightest idea as to where we were, or how we should find our way to the fonda. We spoke none of their language. We were quite unable to carry our own goods and chattels. We ordered the diligence to take us on to our

destination, and might as well have asked the sun and the moon to change places. It drove off rapidly, for the first time that day, and its rattling and rumbling down the narrow street sounded in our ears like so many jeers and gibes.



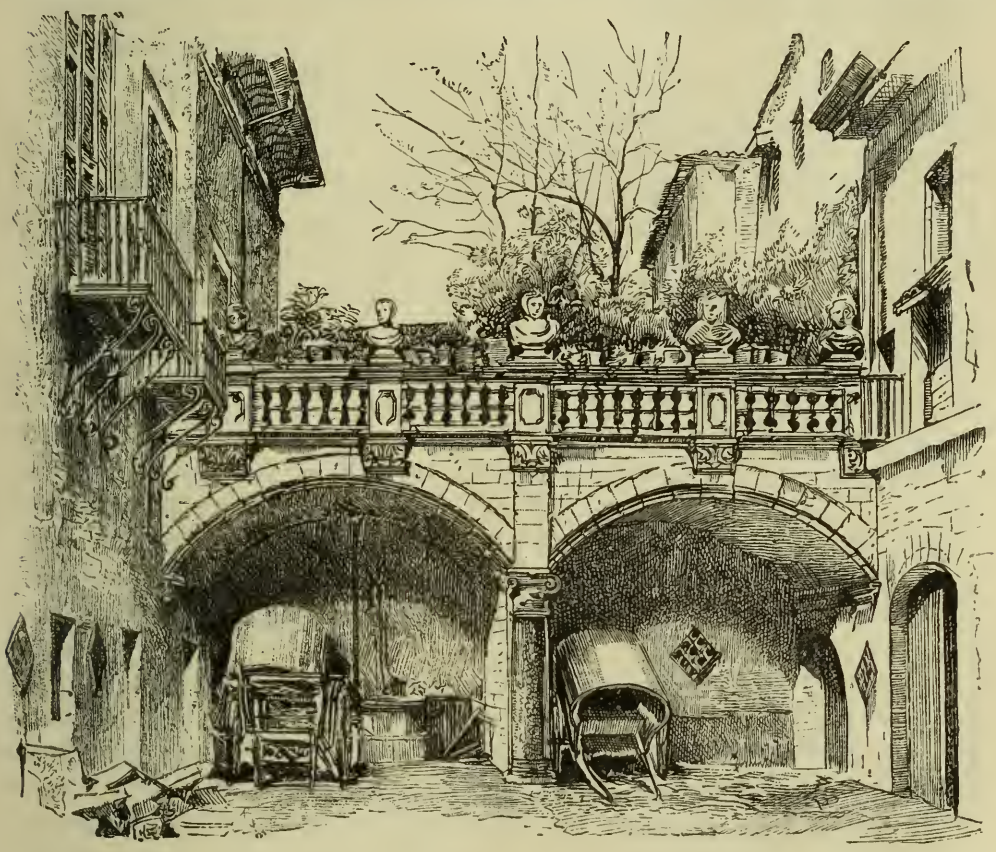
STREET IN PALMA.

Then up came half-a-dozen ragged young ruffians, who seized upon our property, seemed to know by instinct our destination, and made off with a speed which put the diligence to shame and disgrace. We followed pretty sharply, and it was all we could do to keep up with them. On our way we passed a long procession of men bearing lighted candles; and lighted candles were in some of the windows. In the darkness the effect was weird and mournful. We never quite found out what it all meant, but I believe that it was a Mallorcan funeral. Many of them take place at night. And very often, in some parts of the island, one who has died in the morning is buried at night and the funeral service is deferred until the next day.

After we had safely landed at the fonda, and dismissed the tribe with five times their proper amount of backsheesh, we retraced our steps to try and find out and follow up the procession, and learn its object. All had disappeared, mysteriously, incomprehensibly. Not a vestige remained of men or candles. The streets in which it had been looked dark and deserted by contrast. We began to think we must have dreamed a dream; for apparently

there had been neither time nor opportunity for this strange and abrupt extinction.

So we returned to the fonda, wondering. And if we never before appreciated the good things of its dinner table, we did so that evening, and did full justice unto them. Even the noisy company was tolerated. But they were a little more subdued than usual; it was only a shade, but that shade was something. For the first time in our experience there was a lady at table, with her husband. They were French, and evidently of the order of *commerçants;* very substantial in form, but quiet in demeanour. And we felt very grateful



ANCIENT COURT IN PALMA.

to Madame for the effect, slight as it was, that she evidently exercised upon the surrounding assemblage.

They spoke a singular French, this worthy pair. I had never met with it before, and much of it was as Chinese to me. But what I understood of their conversation enabled me to guess at the unknown. It was not learned, or eloquent, or even artistic, but referred to corn and wine, olive-yards and vineyards. And once Madame touched upon the subject of bonnets, and from the expression of Monsieur's face, it was as clear as daylight that she was intimating her intention of buying a new one.

Thus ended our excursion to Soller. But before dismissing the subject, I must explain the mystery of the absent barouche.

In the first place you should have seen the open-mouthed astonishment with which we were greeted on our return. If we had dropped from the clouds or appeared with angels' wings, it could not have been greater; and probably, under those circumstances, as far as the wings are concerned, our own surprise would have equalled anyone else's. The sound of our well-known voice arrested Paolo in the middle of one of his finest flourishes; whilst the canonised Francisco appeared, though without his aureole, and in a state of momentary asphyxiation: speechless.

"How is this?" I enquired, with that Jove-like sternness and power of voice of which you know me capable. "Where is the lordly barouche, and why has it not made its appearance?"

Speech returned to the astonished Saint.

"Monsieur in his note said Samedi—this was only Jeudi," for I had written the note in French, for Francisco's special benefit and interpretation.

This of course was denied, and Señor Don Barnils, our host, appearing upon the scene of action, very politely offered to confound me with the evidence of my own error. It was all I wanted, and the note produced, Jeudi appeared in unmistakable characters.

Penitence of course ensued. Francisco smote his forehead and wished the earth would swallow him up—fancy such a fate for a canonised saint. Señor Don Barnils, owner of the lordly barouche, offered to pay for a mass for the good of my soul, which, heretic that I am, I declined. The thing was done; we had spent our mauvais quart d'heure in the diligence many times multiplied, and there was an end of the matter.

It was our last coming back to Palma; our last excursion in the island. We should not again leave the little capital except by the steamer that would convey us once for all from the happiness and influence of these bright and sparkling shores.

Each time that we return to it, we find something fresh to admire in this Palma de Mallorca: an undiscovered street full of overhanging eaves and wrought iron balconies. An old house not before observed, or a wonderful courtyard that calls out all our admiration and enthusiasm, and sets us violently to work with pencil or camera.

This morning, in a somewhat discursive stroll—if you can make anything of the expression—we came for the hundredth time upon the old Moorish fountain. It is one of the most ancient as well as one of the most picturesque and characteristic bits in all Palma. It stands facing a street, and from it runs a thoroughfare on either side, widening like an opened pair of compasses. A conical-shaped building encloses the water, which is unseen. Here, no doubt, in ancient days, many a Moor drew his supply, and went his way, a far more picturesque object in a far more picturesque street than anything

to be seen in Palma to-day. It is a thousand pities, and a hundred thousand more, that nearly every trace of the Moorish rule and reign has disappeared from Palma; that what remained to refine and beautify the town—and a great deal did remain—was barbarously destroyed at the beginning of this century, by a people who for once took upon themselves to become energetic, and for that once made a fatal mistake.

But I don't think they regret it. A few enlightened souls, such as our artistic photographer, mourn the desecration and speak of it with tears in their eyes, but the greater portion of the inhabitants naturally concern themselves only with the affairs of to-day: buying and selling and getting gain.

This Moorish fountain is further made picturesque by the open roof of the house behind it, and the red pantiles that give to this place such exquisite tone. On either side rises an orange tree, which enlivens it with its green verdure and golden fruit. Altogether it is a charming little bit. I should like to transport it to England, and place it in some favourite old nook, where I might pay it the devotion of a daily visit. But in our insular climate, tone and beauty would disappear; the orange trees would die; it could never be the same thing. The climate of England, like its people, was never made for romance, the delight of the imagination. The gorgeousness of the sunny South, its glamour and splendour, its torrent of passion, and its fierce loves, hates, impulsive sacrifices and mad revenges: of all this England knows nothing. Better for her, no doubt. The intensity of life she loses; of the devotion of a Romeo and Juliet she is incapable; but her calm and even tenor is more to be desired: "love deep and temperate, that longer lives." Autres peuples, autres mœurs.

I do not know whether I have told you that Palma is aristocratic and exclusive; broken up into sections of society, each section refusing to meet the other. The nobility are poor and proud, and live much upon their pedigrees and their ancestral greatness. This is exceedingly good in its way, but after all it does not make one's daily life pass pleasantly or atone for the absence of society and intimate companionship and all their attendant charms. The great Palma distraction is a walk up and down the Rambla before dinner in the middle of the day, and before supper at night. Here the ladies flourish their fans, and adjust their mantillas, and the young men air their canes and walk about in trousers in which I am quite sure, like Lord L— at Bath, they would not for the world sit down. But I am sorry to say that the mantilla is giving way very much to the more modern hat and bonnet; and where this is the case, the ladies lose all their grace and most of their charm. If they are wise they will keep to that which becomes them most.

Society here is not given to entertaining. Everyone dines at two, and everyone takes supper at ten. Many go to bed directly

after, but, as habit becomes second nature, no doubt they escape nightmare. It may, however, account for the heaviness which distinguishes many of the young men, and the absence of ideas which both men and women—I speak of the upper classes—suffer from.

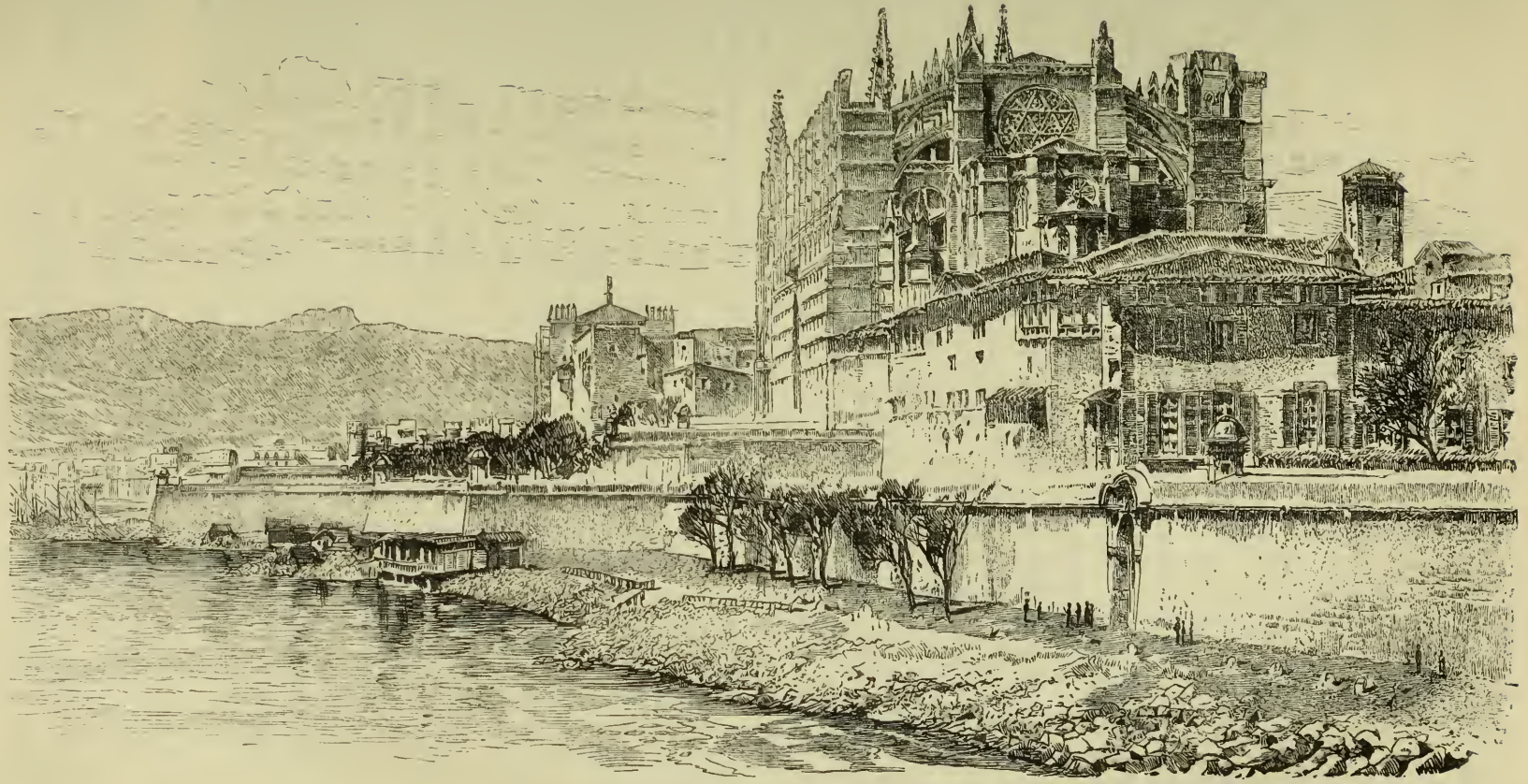
Dinner parties are almost unknown. In the first place, they are unable to arrange and appoint them; and secondly, as they take supper at ten, to give a dinner party would completely disturb their normal habits, and probably upset the domestic equilibrium for a week after.

But in all this they are, after all, following a lead; the lead of their Great Ancestors. It is the effect of training, a heritage handed down to them. No one attempts to strike out a new and more sociable state of existence, where open doors and unceremonious entertaining may go hand-in-hand with all the refinements of life; but then, probably no one in Mallorca wants it or wishes it. Therefore in these few remarks to you, I am not finding fault with them or criticising them, but merely stating facts as they exist. I may think it a pity; a waste of life and opportunity; but that is looking at it from my own point of view. I might take up my abode for a twelvemonth in Mallorca, and the hospitality of its people during the whole of that time would be limited to a few formal calls, than which nothing can be more tedious and unsatisfactory.

The way I should set about it is as follows:

I should take an old palace in some old street, and then send round a gilded intimation to those whom I delighted to honour, that I had come to live at such and such a place; that my house, myself, my horses and carriages, my dogs and cats, my fame, my fortune, in short my all, were at their disposition. Upon which they would respond with a short visit, to be returned in due time. Ainsi-soit-il. But the delights of social life, the friendly intercourse, the intimacy that makes life worth living, yet never passes into that familiarity which breeds contempt: all this is foreign to the habits and customs of Palma society.

But all this, my sister, did not affect the welfare and happiness of H. C. and your devoted though unworthy brother. We had come to Mallorca to see the place; our stay was too limited to attempt to make acquaintance with its people. In Mallorca, too, we have been wanderers; not aimless and profitless, I hope; whilst certainly we have had a great deal of happiness. Fortunately, our minds run very much in the same groove. We both love nature, both see it from the same point of view, both are enthusiastic travellers, and think nothing a trouble, even to getting up at four in the morning, if it is necessary to the attainment of a given object. I pass over H. C.'s poetical genius, and lyrical effusions; and after all he might have a much worse mania. He might, for instance, have been an insect collector, and filled our rooms with crawling spiders and creeping earwigs; and



PALMA, SHOWING EAST END OF CATHEDRAL.

though I don't know that the tarantula is an inhabitant of Mallorca, still I believe there are writhing snakes and slimy lizards. No; our lines have fallen in pleasant places.

Day by day, since our return from Soller, the sun has risen in all its splendour, gilding the town, flashing the blue waters. Day by day we have had an intensely blue and cloudless sky. You in England have been shivering with cold, we have revelled in the warmth of this sunny South. I cannot tell you how it delights me. It gilds the imagination; the blood seems to flow freely through the veins. There is no stagnation. Here I would live and move and have my being; here, or elsewhere in these glowing, golden, flashing, sapphire latitudes, where, as it were, you seem to live in a rainbow and to walk on æther.

It is our last night here—and such a glorious night. I have told you of these nights over and over again, but I cannot bring them too vividly before you. The deep, dark dome and the flashing stars and the travelling constellations, all large and brilliant as England knows and sees them not. We have just been for a walk on the ramparts, and grander than ever—perhaps because it was our farewell look—seemed the cathedral in its sable outlines. It was nearly midnight, and we walked our last night-walk through the street of the town. Nothing disturbed the intense quiet. A screech owl passed through the air; and here and there one heard the monotonous call of an imprisoned quail: but these sounds alone broke the stillness; these, and the far-off call and the heavy tread of a watchman, with the uncertain flash of his lantern.

One is passing as I write, and *Il Sereno* tells us that the night is *serene*. Oh, watchman, what of the night—that night we must all encounter? and what of the morning, and where? No, no, you cannot answer these. You cannot answer me any of the mysteries of life. Bear with me, my sister, for a moment if my pen wanders and melancholy marks me for her own. I have told you it is our last night in Palma. It is the break of our present existence. It is the end of a strangely happy time in a life that was not born to happiness; that began, soothsayers have said, under the influence of the House of Saturn. I tremble to-night. Is this a prelude to some awful change, some dire calamity, that shall turn what little sweet remains to the blackness of night, the bitterness of death? I know not; but there is that sense upon me which has come to me now and then, swift, sure, ominous, indescribable: a prophet of evil: a harbinger of woe.

I will hasten away; but for me to-night there will be no oblivion, no sinking into unconsciousness, no wandering in dreamland. I shall see the sun rise and the day dawn that heralds our departure from this land of the pointed cypress and the spreading palm.

It has come. The sun rose in all its glory. Not a cloud broke

the horizon or flecked the zenith. All was golden, glowing, a sapphire sea and sky. Nothing sad or mournful marks our last day. We will throw sadness to the winds. It is so easy to do so in this gorgeous atmosphere—this is really not a wrong expression. We will laugh and be merry; quaff the muscadel in a stirrup cup; send our spirits up to fever heat; see only the bright side of life.

Our berths are taken, but H. C. declares his intention of remaining on deck all night. I have learned wisdom by experience and make no remark. The chances are that he will turn in before I do.

We have paid our bill in English bank-notes. Will you believe that nothing but our distinguished characters and irreproachable conduct has prevailed upon the landlord to take them? He doesn't understand them; scarcely ever saw them; is unconscious of their value. Is not this a sign of the Mallorcan times, and its sleepy disposition? And is it not charming to have discovered a land so much behind the age, so simple and unsophisticated, so great a contrast to the world in general?

But it is all finally settled. Señor Don Barnils looks unhappy in his mind; but necessity has no law, and, having come to an end of our Spanish money, we must pay our just debts in English.

Then we go down to the steamer. Yes, what we have heard is quite true. You can scarcely walk on board for the pigs: large, black, fat, grunting, horrible animals. The hold is full of them. Every inch of deck is given up to them. The passengers are nowhere and nothing. The few yards of bridge is all they are allowed for fresh air and exercise during the voyage. Even this would no doubt be given to the pigs; but if a sudden storm came on, they would roll over into the sea and be drowned.

In truth it is a most wretched, most uncomfortable state of things. So much so that, like the great troubles of life, it can only be met by absolute resignation.

And now the whistle sounds, and the moorings are loosened, and the water flashes and splashes, and we slowly move from the shore. The last rope is thrown, the last link sundered. Farewell, Palma. You have given us many a pleasant hour, many a happy day. We owe you a debt of gratitude, and we repay it with affection. And in this instance is it not as in all others: Il y à toujours un qui aime et un qui se laisse aimer? What would life be if this were not so true? A paradise, with which we should be content for ever.

> "We clasped hands close and fast,
> As close as oak and ivy stand—
> But it is past."

And Palma is past. We are rapidly receding from its diversified shores, more and more beautiful as distance lends enchantment to the view. Grandly and nobly rises the cathedral, its mellowed tone standing out in exquisite contrast with the glare of the white houses.

But all grows faint and fainter still, and we turn the point, and Palma is altogether lost.

Night comes, and H. C. does not remain on deck. The pigs are too much for him. The drivers are actively moving about, and if an unfortunate animal attempts to lie down, it is immediately prodded on to its legs again. The grunting that goes on incessantly banishes sleep. H. C.'s poetical temperament is ruffled, and my sensitive nerves are disturbed.

But the morning comes also, and at seven o'clock we reach Barcelona. Our miseries are over; we shall land now and forget the night. Not at all. Before we are allowed to leave, the pigs must be attended to. Place aux cochons; they must be landed first. Our luggage is in the hold and we are helpless. They will not give it up to us.

As to the pigs, of course they insist upon going every way but the right way. It is such a scene as I never saw before, and never wish to see again. Men are shouting, pigs are grunting and squealing. Their ears are pulled, and their tails also; in many instances it is a fact that they are landed without the latter, like the sheep of Little Bo-peep.

Added to all this, the balmy air of Palma is a thing of the past. A cold and cutting wind is blowing. We shiver, and long for blankets; rugs; anything that will keep out this chilling blast. But we have to endure it for three hours and a half. At 10.30 the last animal is landed; the boat steams across the harbour, and now at last we are permitted to land also. But this is a barbarous proceeding, a shameful injustice; and it ought to be shown up, and it ought to be remedied.

As we leave the steamer, our very last link with Palma falls to the ground. Mallorca, fair and beautiful, becomes a vision to us, but a vision that shall not pass away.

(To be continued.)

BETWEEN THE SONGS.

By the Author of "Adonais, Q.C."

MADAME ALBRANZO, the great soprano prima donna, having just finished her first song (she had only two on the programme) amidst a rapturous storm of applause from every part of the hall, had bowed and smiled herself off the stage.

She made a little motion of laughing dissent to some of the members of her company, who, standing about the short flight of steps leading to the waiting-rooms, smilingly insisted that a repetition of what she had done was due to the rapture. Then, the expression of her face changing to one of gravity, she hastily explained to a leading contralto that, on account of the fatigue of last night's long journey, she felt slightly indisposed, and would be exceedingly obliged if they could leave her undisturbed, in one of the waiting-rooms, until it was time for her next song. Then Madame Albranzo hurried away on alone to the very end of the passage, where she opened the door of a room, and disappeared.

It was a ballad concert, and it was being held in an old-fashioned low-roofed music-hall, forming one side of a square in a little sea-side country town, in one of the most benighted parts of north-east England.

Never since the hall had been built—by order of the will and testament of some munificent provincial magnate, nearly two hundred years ago—had the faded roofs and walls echoed to such voices as were ringing through it to-night. It was crowded, as it had not been since, two hundred years ago, the be-wigged and be-muffled mayor and magistrates had, with great pomp, and much rustling of stiff silks, declared it open to the people of Ayleshaven for evermore.

The people of Ayleshaven of to-day, for the greater part direct descendants of those other two-hundred-years-ago inhabitants, still keeping up, as they did, the interest in music and the musical world somehow traditional to the little place, had in all probability noted the arrival of Madame Albranzo and her famous company, at a populous town in the midland counties of England.

Then, suddenly, upon a certain fine morning, there had arrived a letter at sleepy Ayleshaven that had roused every slumbering inhabitant to excitement. It was a request from Madame Albranzo to be allowed to give this ballad concert, with her company, in the old music-hall of the little town. She had visited the place in her early youth—had recollections of much happiness connected with it; for the loss or the profit of the engagement she cared nothing; it was only that she had taken a fancy to sing in the old music-hall. Would the mayor and magistrates graciously favour her with a reply as to whether her fancy could be indulged?

The reply had gone back by the next post—an enthusiastic one in the affirmative. The hall, the town, the mayor and magistrates—all were at the feet of Madame Albranzo. She had smiled much as she had read it.

Madame Albranzo now stood in a faded little dressing-room. After closing the door, she stood motionless for an instant, an odd expression of pain on her face as she cast her eyes about. Then she went hurriedly around from jet to jet, turning each one out. The fire had burned low. She was now in the moonlight. The pale beams glinting in through the white blind played and flashed about the diamond stars at her neck and ears.

After a momentary pause of hesitation, she stooped and took hold of the cord for raising the blind. She stood with it in her hand, breathing heavily for a couple of minutes. Then, abruptly leaving hold of it without having raised the blind, sank into a low arm-chair, which stood close by. After hesitating again, she bent forward in her chair and opened the window a little, but without having raised the blind. Then she settled her elbow on the arm of the chair and rested her face on her hand, apparently listening intently. The sound of the dull thud and swish of the waves beating on the shore was wafted in by the frosty breezes.

She sat listening thus for a minute or two. Tall, very handsome, superbly dressed, yet with a weary look just now, infinitely pathetic in her dark eyes. She had masses of pale yellow hair, looking paler in this light, for although bearing her foreign name in all legitimacy, having been married to a foreigner, Madame Albranzo was herself an Englishwoman. At her years, still thirty-eight or thirty-nine, the lilies and roses of her complexion attested, at all events in the daylight, to her nationality, just as did the hair. Even lilies and roses, however, look pale in the shadowy moonbeams.

Suddenly an idea struck her.

Rising quickly, she caught up a warm wrap from the table, and, winding it round her head and neck, passed swiftly over the room and out into the dark passage. Pausing an instant, and then hurrying on for a yard or two in the opposite direction—she appeared to know the way well—she opened a door leading out into a quiet by-street.

There was nobody from end to end of the little street. The noise of the waves was here very loud, and the icy night wind beating against her was redolent of the rocks and seaweed. Just at the end of the street she dropped her pale satin train on the frosty ground, and pulling out a programme of the concert from somewhere in the folds of her dress, consulted it by aid of the feeble street lamp. Then, having reassured herself as to the exact position of her next song in the programme, she took hold of her train again, resettled her shawl, and resolutely turned the corner.

She passed directly across a small grass-grown common—always

approaching the sea—and at last came to a dead stand before the door of a long rambling detached house. The only house on the common.

She now very slowly lowered her shawl from her head. Exactly opposite to this, at the other side of the common was the back of the music hall; the window, with the blind still drawn down, at which she had a few minutes before been standing. After lowering her shawl, she abruptly, and for the first time since she had turned the corner, opened her eyes. *She had crossed the common, fair over here with her eyes shut.* A spasm of the deepest emotion shot across her face as she opened her eyes on the house. Madame Albranzo was standing at the door-step of the house she had been born in.

Upon a moonlight December evening, just exactly twenty years ago, Madame Albranzo had come out at that door-step, and then stood looking back at the house just in the spot from where she looked at it now. This was the first time, for twenty years, that she had stood looking up at the house.

Twenty long years—and yet here it was just the same; brown and comfortable-looking and quiet. Something of hardiness and independence in its air, speaking to the imaginative of the free breakers just beyond. And so during all these years of her hurrying life the house had stood unchanged and immovable—with the sound of the sea behind and the sighing of the wind about its chimneys.

Oh, she had never dreamed of finding it so. She had never dared to hope such a thing. Knowing of the breaking up of the old home, the dispersion over the world of its inmates, she had somehow never imagined but that the outward aspect of the house must be changed as well. Yet it had seemed as if the full realisation of this breaking up had never been brought home to her until now. Bitter tears gathered and thickened in her eyes as she slowly turned them from point to point, from window to window.

Oh, how unchanged the whole thing was. There was no light in any part of the house—at all events perceptible from this—and even on this winter night the hall door stood partially open. Impelled by a sudden burning desire, she went quickly up and passed into the hall, throwing the door close a little after her. Then she stood, listening for any sound in the house, half afraid of her own boldness.

She stood listening thus for a couple of minutes. There was no sound at all, save the scratching of a mouse in the wainscot. Why, where was everybody? Then, laughing aloud, she drew herself up and cast her eyes around. She understood it all—it was only another proof of the unchanged aspect of everything. The two servants belonging to the house in her day, would invariably take advantage of any absence of the family to hurry over to "The Tit-mouse," at the other side of the market square, where they would sit gossiping and drinking tea with old Mrs. Cockle, the landlady.

These servants had hurried over to "The Tit-mouse," she was

certain of it. There would be a young Mrs. Cockle now, that would be the only atom of difference. Oh, how droll, how odd it was! and look at the boys' hats hanging there in the hall—swinging a little in the draught. They might have belonged to her own brothers.

There was evidently nobody in the house.

She moved a step or two farther into the hall, and finding a door to the left a little ajar, pushed it open. Yes, the room was precisely the same. Her father had been the principal doctor in Ayleshaven, and it was doubtless just as she had begun to suspect, that his successors had taken over the house and furniture, at a valuation, along with the practice.

She turned away with a quick little sigh, and then hastily looked back, a different expression on her face. Yonder was the table where Oliver, her youngest brother, always kept his canary in its cage. Yes, there was the same cage, covered up with a red cloth just as Oliver always used to cover it. Doubtless there was a little canary inside, sleeping.

At the top of the first flight of stairs was the dining-room. The door of that stood wide open (when was it ever shut?) with the brilliant moonlight flooding through the windows. Tea had only been partially cleared away. There was the remains of what looked like a hurried meal—as if somebody had been out all day, and had rushed in just for a mouthful before dressing for the concert: leaving behind them a very strongly-scented little pink envelope—of a letter evidently torn open, and probably thrust into the pocket; and at the other end, beside the cold beef, an uncut sporting newspaper. Well—she almost laughed. That was all so like her eldest brother, Reuben.

Along the passage to the left from the dining-room, was a little room known as the ante-room. The drawing-room opened beyond. Here, too, was everything as she remembered it. There was the old brown couch that Geoffrey used to be so fond of reading on; there was the cabinet her grandfather brought home from Japan. There was the high bookcase full of scientific and physiological works—with the key left sticking in the lock, just as Geoffrey might have left it. It was the only thing that used to be capable of angering her father with Geoffrey—his prime favourite.

And now where was Geoffrey? He had been a quiet studious lad—her senior by eighteen months—twenty years ago. She had had no direct communication with any of her family during that twenty years; but somehow or other, by this means or that means, she had learned this:—That Geoffrey had broken his father's heart—and yet this same father had seen her, a girl of eighteen, walk out of this ante-room, in all human possibility for ever, without a quiver of an eye-lid. How he must have loved Geoffrey!

Beyond the ante-room lay the drawing-room. She passed into that almost timidly—having half an inclination to close her eyes, as she had done whilst crossing the common. Quaint and dreamy—

unutterably charming—ah, here it was—here it was as she had ever pictured it; with its plenitude of downy ottomans, magnificent in mellow tinted silk and faded roses, and its faint sweet scent of Eastern spices.

The window looked out on a little garden, and beyond that over a grand expanse of sea. The waves were flying hither and thither, and tossing and leaping in the moonlight; almost phantom-like in their quick silvery brilliance. Louder than in any other part of the house one heard here the boom and thud on the shore; and mingling with that, in an odd drowsy fashion, there was a continual low-toned sighing sound, in two distinct keys—murmuring about the window.

She seemed to become perfectly rigid for a minute as she listened to it: the pupils of her large dark eyes dilated, her lips parched. A vague conviction that had always been in her mind now intensified to certainty: that had it not been for this dreamily-chanting window, this weird view of the waves, these mysteriously-scented ottomans—had it not been, in a word, for this room, she would not have been *herself*, with her own powers, own passions, own sentiments.

Remembering the past twenty years, it was little wonder that she was, in a dazed sort of way, trying to understand whether she was glad or sorry that there had ever been this room—and through the vague wandering she was all the time sitting once more in recollection, just as she had actually sat hundreds of times, young, enthusiastic with belief and hope in everything worth believing and hoping in, side by side on the dreamy window-seat with Oliver.

The expression in her eyes suddenly changed to one of flaming anger, as she remembered how persistently it had been maintained to her—that Oliver had been the first to forget her. She had always known—and yet never perhaps so certainly as now, the sickening falseness of that. They might have misrepresented her to him; they might—oh, heaven—have turned him against her. But Oliver could not have forgotten her; oh, Oliver could never have forgotten her. She pressed her lips tenderly to the window-seat, and turned away with all the late passion in her eyes subdued into intense sadness.

Then, going over to the mantelpiece, she took her stand thoughtfully before it.

She had stood just here, with her elbow resting just like this upon the marble, on that evening. She had been in the habit of standing in that position, a trick probably caught from her father, and had fallen into it unconsciously then; with her father on the other side of the hearth-rug, pitiless and uncompromising, commanding her to decide on the moment the future course of her whole life, whether it was to be in this way or that way; her brothers watching awe-struck from different parts of the room. How well she remembered! One by one the figures seemed to stand out before her in the gloom.

These were the exact facts of the case: it was easy to recall them.

Oscar Albranzo, an artist of moderate means, had strayed up to Ayleshaven from Scarborough, where he had been living for his health, in search of artistic subjects. In the natural course of things he met the Doctor's pretty daughter at this and that Ayleshaven tea-party and little social gatherings. The man was handsome and fascinating, his foreign accent was only sufficiently marked to be picturesque. To all appearance he fell passionately in love with the girl; whilst she, on her side, notwithstanding that in spite of his fascinations he was twenty years her senior, by the end of a week or two literally adored the ground he walked on.

Some news of this kind found its way to her father, the Doctor. From the first he had disliked Albranzo; he gave his daughter to understand at once that there must an end come rapidly to the folly.

The girl was young and high-spirited, and very much in love. She went straight to Albranzo with the news, who first laughed a great deal and then persuaded her into thinking herself very unjustly treated by her father.

So the folly, instead of coming to an end, recommenced with new vigour—Albranzo, piqued by the Doctor's dislike, entering now at all events with real zest into the matter.

Then at last there had come the day when her father, infuriated by some new piece of gossip, walked into this room, where she had been playing a round game with her brothers, and briefly, without any show of emotion, ordered her at once, there and now, to choose betwixt her brothers and him—or Albranzo. Albranzo, whether in jest or earnest, had repeatedly proposed that she should go away with him and marry him; possibly it was this, amongst other things, that had reached the Doctor's ears. She had remained stunned by the blow for a minute, standing there with her elbow on the mantelpiece, and had then answered clearly—for Albranzo.

Her father has accepted her answer quite calmly, given her concisely to understand that with her marriage would end all possible connection betwixt her and her family, and politely requested her to hasten arrangements as much as practicable for that marriage; arranging, too, where it was to take place.

Her answer to that had been to go straight to her room, hastily crush a few things into a portmanteau, and after coming in here and taking formal leave of them, to walk out of the house with her portmanteau.

It would have been difficult to say if she had any distinct plan of immediate action in her mind when she left her house, but as fate willed it she met Albranzo at the other side of the common. He laughed, then, until the tears ran down his handsome face, standing opposite to the girl as she made her tragic impassioned narration, all the time her delicate wrists bowed down with the portmanteau in the icy winter moonlight. All at once he took the portmanteau out of her hands, made a hasty appointment to meet her on the morrow, and

suggested that she should take shelter for that night with Mrs. Cockle, of "The Tit-mouse," who had once been her nurse.

Yes, he must really have loved her then at all events, for on the morrow he actually married her. Then they had gone away together, leaving behind them for ever all ties connecting them to Ayleshaven.

Ah, well, but alas! it had not been a happy marriage. As she stood just now in the old place at the mantelpiece, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

They had gone to London, where Albranzo had very evidently soon grown tired of her. She had always known that she could sing—had gone singing about all day in the old house upon the common, by very instinct, as the birds sing in the summer-tide. She had had the power of charming her brothers into good humour at any time, just through her voice; of softening her father. She had been a grand social success in little Ayleshaven just on account of this.

Albranzo was not a musical man himself; but a great light in the musical world had come to the Albranzos' lodgings one day, who had been startled, as perhaps he had never been in all his life before, by the sound of Madame Albranzo chanting a weird little hymn over her needlework. She had not completed her eighteenth year even then, and it was just as she reached her twenty-first that she suddenly burst upon the world, still under the patronage of the great musical light, as one of the most unrivalled prima donnas ever known.

During these intervening years she had worked at the cultivation of her voice. Just about the time of her first success, Albranzo died. He had not been a kind husband to her in any one respect; but she continued then, and ever after continued, to sing under his name.

During his lifetime, Albranzo had resolutely forbidden her—through a spirit of cruelty, pure and simple—to make any inquiries regarding her family. A week after his death news came to her unbidden. Somebody, just arrived from Canada, quite incidentally mentioned an English family he had happened to come across there—a Doctor, with his three sons, Reuben, Geoffrey and Oliver. They had only come over from England themselves a week previously. He, the narrator, knew nothing as to the cause of their emigration; was ignorant even as to their ultimate destination. Was this all he had to tell—*all*, Madame Albranzo had asked, gaspingly. It was, he had answered, looking at her in surprise. Then Madame Albranzo's face had flushed crimson, and in the same instant became deadly white. He had wondered much, but turned the subject. Then the years had flown on again.

The years had flown on. It had wounded her to the quick that they could have gone away without even a line in the newspapers; for she had been a constant examiner of the agony columns. It was this that decided her, on her side, to make no attempt for reconcilia-

tion. Then long after, ten years after or so, in the very zenith of her power, another stray scrap had come drifting over the ocean.

Shooting on the rocky mountains, the same man who had before been her informant had met with Reuben. He had heard from Reuben just two or three little details, and this—that Geoffrey had broken his father's heart. What of Oliver, what of Oliver, she had cried to the man, forgetting her self-enforced reserve. He had then explained that, not being sure whether Madame Albranzo would wish her name mentioned, knowing only of her interest in the family, he had made inquiries of Reuben without revealing their cause. Reuben had a little resented them, and had answered only as regards Oliver—that he was one of those "that go down to the sea in ships; that do business in great waters."

And this was all that she knew of Oliver! Oh, and listen to the boom of the waves, and the two weird notes, the high note and the low note, whispering about the window. Where was Oliver?

Well, before she lay down to rest that night she would begin to take steps for tracing him and the rest of them. All these years she had stuck to her pride, but this old room had broken it down at last. It did not matter if she had the whole world to search; it did not matter if she had to search it herself. She had plenty of money; she was still a young woman.

She hurried out of the drawing-room and through the ante-room, remembering, not so much that it must be nearly time for her second song, as that she must hasten at once to take steps for tracing her father and brothers. Reuben had not said that her father was dead: only that his heart was broken. Geoffrey must be found, everything made right that he had done wrong; himself reclaimed, if that was necessary. She would be the binder of her father's wounds.

On the way downstairs she cast a look into what had been the two younger boys' room. The window was high open; the moonlight silently falling, fair and wide, upon a bed littered with coats and sticks which might have been Geoffrey's and Oliver's. Upon the soiled table were flung down a couple of razors, showing that somebody had rushed in here to dress—so like a habit of Reuben's. She just looked in and then hastened on to the hall door; her mind engrossed with the prospect of searching the world for them. At the door she paused, then once again turning, hurried a step or two down a back passage. She thought that just before leaving, she would like to have one peep into what used to be her own room.

She opened the little door softly; she knew it well. There was very little light here, a dark green blind being pulled to the foot. She cast her eyes round the familiar objects; the small arched fireplace; the press at the further end of it; and then, as her glance travelled naturally to the bed in the corner, she gave a violent start. *There was a figure lying sound asleep in it.*

It was the figure of a girl; it only required a single glance to discern that. A ray of light, glinting through a rent in the blind, played upon the back of a small golden head resting on the pillow.

After the first start, Madame Albranzo turned to steal hastily away; and then stood hesitating, in some way fascinated by the sight of the golden head on the pillow. Oh, how often *her* head had rested there. She could remember once when her father and brothers had all gone to a concert in the music-hall, leaving her at home with a headache, of going to bed and falling asleep just like this; and of Oliver wakening her to tell her that they had come home to find the servants out and the front door open. That was in the old happy time, before she had known Albranzo. Who was this girl on her bed? What like was she? Would it be, *could* it be possible to have just one look? The face was turned the other way.

Irresistibly fascinated, she crept into the room, gathering up her rustling train out of the way of the furniture. Oh, if the girl should waken! Now she was at the other side of the fireplace; now she had reached the end of the bed. She gasped, and then stood for an instant motionless as a plank creaked under her weight. Now at last she was coming within sight of her face; another step and she would be able to see it. Before taking the step she paused, startled by some noise in the lobby. It was only the little mouse still scraping. She put her hand softly on the wall and bent forward, peering. Yes, she was making out the lineaments of the face slowly in the gloom. Suddenly she started bolt upright with a great cry. *She was looking on herself as she had been at seventeen.*

Madame Albranzo stood breathing heavily and holding her hand to her heart in the moon-lit dressing-room; supporting herself by keeping fast hold of the arm-chair beside the window. The Mayor of Ayleshaven bowed obsequiously before her.

"I am so sorry I startled you," he was murmuring apologetically. "I had knocked several times without answer, and, concluding you were after all not here, I—I ventured to open the door. As I suppose it is just about time for your second song, allow me to say at once how infinitely ——"

She interrupted him briefly, but in a dazed sort of way—as one still half in a dream.

"Have I been sleeping?" she said faintly.

The mayor smiled. "Why, yes, you have, Madame Albranzo," he answered. "I hope you have been having pleasant dreams. They told me you had come here to rest; but, the fact is, I had waited so long for you to come out, and your second song was so near, I really could not refrain from ——"

She interrupted again—coming nearer to him.

"I have been sleeping—*dreaming*—you are sure? I have never left this room at all; I have never been outside?"

"Why no, madame, certainly not," he answered, in astonishment.

"I did not go over to the old house on the common; I did not find everything unchanged; I did not see myself asleep in my own bed?—Oh, heaven!—as I was at seventeen—I did not?" she persisted, breathlessly.

"Madame?" stammered the mayor.

The dead silence of a minute fell upon them—a strange new light of recognition creeping slowly into the face of the mayor. The blind was still down on the window—still slightly open; the wind and the roar of the sea sighing through it together. Suddenly he spoke in a low, moved voice.

"The doctor, and his three sons—and his daughter—I remember them quite well. They used to live, something like twenty years ago, in the old house on the common. After the daughter went away, trouble—disgrace, incident on the conduct of one of the sons, fell on the rest of the family. They sailed together for Canada."

"Can you help me to find them?" she said, almost in a whisper.

"Perhaps. I can, at all events, try," he answered, in the same way.

"Hush," she said, as a footstep sounded in the passage—adding, hastily: "Pull up the blind and let me see. It was, then, that I fell asleep. I had not the nerve to do it."

He hesitated—his lips trembling, as if in the desire to say something in remonstrance.

"Pull it up," she panted.

Without another word he turned and did as she bade him. The long straggling grass was waving to and fro, fair down, uninterruptedly, to where the waves, beating against the shore, sprang foaming and sparkling high into the air. The old house on the common was gone.

"It was burned to the ground," the mayor murmured brokenly, "upon the very night after they sailed for Canada. The place has been just as you see it, ever since then."

Five minutes later Madame Albranzo swept smiling across the brilliant platform, amidst a storm of enthusiastic bravos and a shower of bouquets, to sing her second song. Those who had heard her often, and at her best, afterwards declared that she had never, never sung so beautifully.

JACK AND JILL.

TWO figures were standing in the bay-window of a country drawing-room; a glorious summer's sunset was gilding the topmost branches of the trees in the old garden with its last rays, and the chimes in the village church-tower rang out eight o'clock. Their sound broke a long silence which had reigned in the room, and the young man, fixing his eyes on his girl companion, spoke hurriedly.

"I did not know it was so late! I must be off, or I shall miss my train to town, and my regiment at Portsmouth, and all my chances of getting on in the world. But, by Heaven, I'll do even that, if you will only say to me 'Stay!'"

"But I don't say Stay, Jack; I say Go. Go, and God bless you!"

There was a deep tenderness in her low voice which any man might have been proud to hear, but, because she would not grant him his wish, young Marriott found her harsh and cruel.

"And what's the good of that, if you yourself won't bless me, Jill? What else in the world do I care for but your ——"

"Then go and do your duty, and prove yourself worthy of me!"

"But if you will not promise me that you will be mine?" he asked sadly. And Jill went on to answer him in her sweetest, firmest way.

"I have told you, Jack, that, though I will not promise now to be your wife, I will promise it to you in three years, or sooner, if you come home; and, till then, you and I are both of us to be free. I know my own heart well enough, and I daresay you think you know yours, but how can you tell with whom you may fall in love while you are away? You are only one-and-twenty now, and I am almost the only girl you have ever known. How can you tell what the world may have to teach you and show you?"

"Oh, my darling! No one else in it can ever be the same to me that you are!"

"Well, then, if you think so after three years, I will be your proud wife. Surely, if we are in earnest, we can be true to each other without any formal promise to bind us! And, if we cannot, then it will be ten times better for us never to have been engaged. Now, good-bye, Jack," she added, after a pause. "As you say, if you stay longer, you will really be too late. Good-bye."

"You are so calm and quiet. Ah, Jill, if you cared as much as I do!" And he seized her hand and covered it with kisses.

She was very calm, certainly; but for all that, when in another

moment he was gone and there was no one to see her emotion, she threw herself on the sofa, murmuring between her deep sobs: "Oh! my darling, my darling! And he thinks it is because I do not love him enough. Am I right to treat him so? Is it wise?"

Was she right? Was it wise? At any rate she had sent him away from her. And as he left her that summer's evening, a bright, splendid, perfect knight, whom any fair lady might well be proud of, she never saw him again.

And yet it was because he was so splendid that she had refused his pleadings. Jack was the only child of the squire of the parish, General Marriott; and Jane Armstrong, once named Jill by Jack, and afterward universally called so, was the eldest daughter of the Rector. The Rectory garden was bounded on two sides by the woods around the Hall, and, from their childhood, Jack and Jill had been accustomed to play together during the holidays like brother and sister.

When she was seventeen and he nineteen, he passed with credit into the Engineers, and went up to Chatham to study, and when he came back from his first term there, the old relationship between the two was at an end, a change in it being unavoidable, if sad. Jill was shy and Jack officiously polite; wearing his best clothes when he was likely to meet her, bringing her flowers from his father's conservatory and grapes from his vinery; and, in fact, making hot love to her, which state of things continued until the occurrence of the scene described above.

General Marriott saw it all plainly enough, but being fond of Jill, he was well pleased at the prospect of having her for his future daughter-in-law.

It was Jill, only Jill, who saw any hazard in the engagement, although it seemed to her that her whole happiness depended upon it. It was for that very reason she wished to win, not the rash, impetuous, boyish love Jack could give her at present, but the love of his future manhood, of his life. She was so well aware of all the advantages he possessed: his social position, which would introduce him into the best society; his physical beauty, his winning grace, his ready wit, which would ensure him friends and admirers wheresoever he might be: was it likely that he would always remain true to the everyday English girl with no especial gifts? Yes, it *was* likely, Jill thought thankfully, because she knew something of his character; but it was not certain, for he was untried. Let him be tried: and then, if he proved faithful, he should be rewarded by a love as deep as the fathomless sea, as strong as the elements themselves, and faithful unto death! Little did Jack know, as he left the Rectory gates, that such a gift was his already, whether he ever came back worthy to claim it or not.

And so two years passed away while Jack was in India. They did not write to each other except on birthdays and special occasions, because Jill had forbidden correspondence as likely to make him feel

less free. From General Marriott, she heard of him every other week, and he seemed to be well and popular and happy.

Of a young curate, who came to the parish, and after doing his utmost to win Jill's love, left the place in anger and despair, it is needless to write here: his pride was, after all, more wounded by the utter coldness of her manner than his heart smitten by it.

At the end of two years, the old General, who had been a long while a widower, died; and Jill learnt no more now of Jack's welfare, for the Hall was entirely closed. At that time, too, the second Afghan war broke out, and his regiment was sent to the front.

Those were anxious days for her, when she daily waited at the Rectory gate to meet the old postman who brought the morning paper, and with trembling hands would open it to see if any battle had been fought and what names were amongst the killed or wounded or sick.

At last, one evening her brother came back from a neighbouring town with news of the defeat of Maiwand: he knew no particulars, and Jill had to wait till the next day in sickening anxiety. She spent the night sleeplessly, but not tearfully; for if her darling died a soldier's death, why she, a soldier's sweetheart, must be brave too—if only she could be sure she *was* his sweetheart still! Surely the war was a special occasion which would have warranted his writing to her. Yet never a line from him had come.

The next morning, when the postman put the paper in her hand, she leaned against an old chestnut tree in the garden and opened it and read—first the names of those killed in battle. Thank God, thank God, his was not amongst them! Then, the seriously wounded. Ah! there it was, one of the very first: Lieutenant John Marriott of the Royal Engineers! He was suffering agonies in some camp hospital: perhaps dying, or perhaps dead! Oh! why had she not gone out at the beginning of the war, with other ladies, as a nurse? Then she might have been with him now, to win him back to life again with her care and tenderness, or to comfort him until the end.

Wish as vain as it was earnest! for she was in her far away English home, and must hurry into the schoolroom to superintend the lessons of her young sister; and into the garden to see about having the Autumn fruits picked for jam-making; and to a dozen other small duties, which make up the sum total of a woman's daily life.

Two days afterwards, there came great comfort for her in an Indian letter from Jack, written some weeks before the Maiwand disaster, and brimful of good spirits and hope; and these words were at the end of it: "If I get through this campaign all right and come home again safe and sound, will my time of probation be over then? Tell me, my darling, for indeed, indeed, I am getting weary of it?"

Aye, the time of probation was over, but would he ever know it?

After that, Jill heard nothing of him for over six months, and although she had not seen any mention of his death in the papers, hope, growing less and less, had almost left her. In spite of her good courage, it was with a white face and a weary step that she went about her duties; she, who was wont to be so cheerful in the days gone by, that she had been called by the family, "Sunshine."

She had now a strange fancy for sitting, towards sunset, alone in the bay window, where she had last parted from her lover; and one evening: it was a Sunday: having excused herself from going with the rest to church on the plea of fatigue, she lay there in a rocking-chair, dreaming sweet day-dreams of that bright, manly young face which had looked so entreatingly into hers, and seeming to hear again his reproachful cry, "Ah, Jill, if you cared as much as I do!"

A day-dream, and yet a reality; for as she raised her eyes, Jack, or else his ghost, was standing beside her!

But it was no ghost who flung his arm round her neck, and repeated again and again: "My darling! My Jill! my treasure!"

"Oh! Jack, Jack; I thought you would never come!"

"So did I," he said, solemnly. "But look at me, my dear one: I am not the same. I ——"

Then she saw that the right sleeve of his coat was hanging empty at his side.

"No, Jack, you are not the same," she said, catching up her breath, "for you are mine now, whatever is in store for either of us. Only forgive me for not having trusted you sooner."

"Yet that was well, my love: because you see if we had been promised to each other, and I had come back to you like this, why you would have felt obliged to have me, and — perhaps— perhaps ——"

"I should never have been so worthless as that, I hope; but doing without you has taught me to value you now, and if the lines have been hard ——" She was crying on his poor wounded shoulder.

"Please God, the hard lines are over for us both: for me they are at any rate," he whispered, looking down at her fondly and proudly, "for the angels are not all in heaven yet."

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XV.

IN EATON PLACE.

RICHARD MAUDE DYNEVOR, Doctor of Divinity, Canon and Sub-Dean of Oldchurch, was seated in his study at his sister's house, Eaton Place, when two young men were shown into it. The sight of the first, Charles Baumgarten, was sufficient to make him spring to his feet, his very shoe buckles sparkling with wrath.

"Again!" he stuttered. "Do you dare appear in my presence to beard me with your insolence? But for the memory of your father, I would order my servants to put you forth."

"Why, you are more peppery than you used to be, Doctor," cried a voice from behind Charles—that of Cyras; who had about as much reverence for a high-church dignitary as for a native savage of his adopted land. The Canon stretched his stern, dark face round, to see whose bold voice might be thus addressing him. Charles spoke.

"When I assured you I was not at the Haymarket Theatre the other night, sir, you might have trusted my word, after knowing me all these years. It was my brother who was there; and Miss Dynevor was deceived by the resemblance."

The Sub-Dean gazed at both of them. "What is it *you?*" he exclaimed. "Come back to trouble England!"

"I am here to honour it and its natives with a visit: you amongst the rest," cried the undaunted Cyras, as he shook the Sub-Dean's reluctant hand. "Glad to see you in robust health and voice, sir."

The reverend gentleman coughed. Cyras, years ago, had gone in and out of his house as one of his own boys, and been on the same familiar terms with him. He turned to Charles:

"Then am I to understand that you were not at the theatre, Charles Baumgarten? She insisted that you were there most positively, you know, and she did not allow me to doubt her assertion."

"To be there under the circumstances described would be very unlikely for me," returned Charles. "I think you might have known, sir, that I was not capable of it."

Something like "Plague take her!" escaped the lips of the Canon.

"I'm sorry I offended Aunt Ann," said Cyras. "I hear she looks upon my nodding to her as a personal insult. What if I *had* a lady upon my arm when I nodded? Aunt Ann never liked pretty

women, I remember, and that one is pretty beyond common ; a star, Doctor, of the first water."

For once in his life the Sub-Dean's fancy was tickled. He enjoyed a side fling at his sister. And Cyras was, in his opinion, so very lost a sheep that had he appeared at the play with an army of ladies instead of one, it would have given the Sub-Dean no manner of concern.

"You had better go to the drawing-room and make it right with them," he said, when the young men had explained about Mrs. Carington and one or two other matters. "Tell Ann all this, and re-establish yourself in her favour."

It may as well be remarked that the likeness between the brothers was not so very astonishing when they were together, or to those who knew them well. A very great resemblance there undoubtedly was, quite sufficient to deceive the jeweller, and Miss Dynevor also, who had no suspicion that Cyras was in England. But to strangers, looking at the two for the first time, the likeness was marvellous.

It chanced that Miss Dynevor was this morning in an exasperated mood, brought on by her ineffectual endeavours to induce Mary to say she would give up Charles Baumgarten. Her chosen seat when lecturing her nieces was the music stool. Drawn to the middle of the room, she sat, perched like Jupiter on Olympus, tall and formidable, in a grass-green stiff gown with balloon sleeves, her flaxen curls elaborately arranged and her tongue sharpened.

"It seems to me that the world must be coming to an end," she said, haranguing all three girls in general, but Mary in particular; "and the sooner the better, if this is to be the order of things. In my younger days we modest maidens never so much as looked at an unmarried man : as to talking openly of one, as I have seen you girls doing over and over again, we should have been shut in our rooms for a month after it. While you, Mary Dynevor, scruple not to uphold Charles Baumgarten's conduct the other night!"

"What I say is this, Aunt Ann—that Charles could not behave in the manner you have related," responded Mary, a sound of tears in her voice.

"How dare you insult me by doubting my word?"

"I don't doubt your word, Aunt ; I doubt your eyesight. You mistook someone else for Charles."

Miss Dynevor shrieked. "You insolent girl!—mistook him, did I? When he turned his face impudently towards mine, and grinned and nodded to me! He winked, too ; I vow and protest he winked. The fact is, he must have been making free with some sort of wine."

"He assured me in the presence of papa that it was not himself : that it was a mistake, for he was not out of his chambers at all that night."

"And you believed him!" scoffed Miss Dynevor.

"With my whole heart," warmly returned Mary, a glowing colour

dyeing her face. "I would rather die than disbelieve Charles Baumgarten."

"That's a pretty modest avowal!" gasped Miss Dynevor. "You will —— Regina, what on earth are you doing there?"

"Only what you told me to do, Aunt Ann," replied Regina, with the utmost apparent innocence, as she held out Miss Dynevor's knitting, nearly the whole of which she had been quietly undoing.

"*I* told you!" shook Miss Dynevor, half beside herself with vexation: "I said to you 'Do a bit!'"

"Oh, 'Do a bit,'" commented Regina. "I thought you said 'Undo a bit.' I'm sure I'm very sorry, Aunt. It was a nightcap for Archdeacon Duck, wasn't it?"

Aunt Ann's wrath was arrested midway, for Charles and his brother at that moment entered. She knew Cyras at once, and pushed up her wig a little in astonishment. Cyras advanced to the young ladies to greet them in what he called New Zealand custom, which they found meant neither more nor less than kissing.

When the noise and laughter had subsided, Cyras turned to Miss Dynevor. "May I venture to touch your fingers with the tips of mine, Aunt Ann?"

No response. Miss Dynevor had not recovered from her petrefaction.

"It's only right to ask, before presuming," went on Cyras; "because, you know, at the play the other night, you looked as though you wanted to annihilate me."

However annihilating Miss Dynevor might have looked the other night, she looked very foolish now. Cyras standing before her with his gay glances, Grace and Regina enjoying her discomfiture, and Mary drawing nearer to Charles as if it were her own sheltering place, a happy smile on her eye and lip.

Miss Dynevor's temper was exceedingly acid just then. "The Sub-Dean forbade you the house," she said sharply to Charles. "Do you set him at defiance?"

"The Sub-Dean!" interrupted Cyras. "My dear lady, we have been making ourselves comfortable with the Sub-Dean in his study for this half hour. He sent us to you here that we might do the same with you."

There was no daunting Cyras. Miss Dynevor demanded whether he knew the meaning of the word impudence, and why he had presumed to address her that night under such very doubtful circumstances.

"The circumstances will bear the strictest investigation," laughed Cyras. "The lady I escorted to the theatre is charming, and one of my very good friends. I'll bring her to see you, if you like."

"Mary," whispered Charles, whilst Aunt Ann was striving to frame a fitting answer to this last most astounding proposition, "they did not make you doubt me?"

"Never, Charles."

"Were it my case," spoke Regina, boldly, "I should get married at once, and live upon cold mutton and barley water until Charley's briefs came in more quickly. You may get parted for good if you don't by some plausible tale or other. One never knows what may happen."

A soft flush lighted Mary's cheek: cold mutton and barley water bore no doubtful prospect for her. But Charles sighed deeply. He could carry out Regina's suggestion, and add something to it even, upon his present briefs; he knew that: but, then—how was he to help Cyras?

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SUB-DEAN CONDESCENDS.

In one of the pleasant rooms at Avon House, its windows open to the lawn, to the scent of the flowers and the sound of the bees, harbingers of the approaching summer, there stood a group of fair people. We know most of them. Cyras and Charles had travelled down that morning to Great Whitton; and Charles had whispered to his mother all about Cyras's prospects of the partnership and of Anna Jansen, and of how he meant to help him. It did not please Lady Grace. Cyras had stepped outside.

"Don't tell me, Charles. I know Cyras. If you help him to-day, he'll need help again to-morrow."

"That is rather unjust, mother mine. Cyras has needed no help from us up to this very day. He did not ask for it now. I think you have always misjudged him a little. You never loved him as you loved me and Gertrude."

"How could I?" somewhat sharply rejoined Lady Grace. "Another loved him more than all if I did not—his father."

"Well, I feel that we ought to help him to this chance, mother," said Charles. "I will do my part to it, and perhaps Uncle Henry will do the rest. It seems to me to lie in our duty—at least, in mine. Come hither, Gertrude; tell mamma what your opinion is: you have been listening to our conversation."

Gertrude Baumgarten came forward, a tenderness in her blue eyes. She knelt at her mother's knee—a half-playful, half-fond position she had always rather favoured—and spoke in a low, sweet tone.

"I have been listening, as Charles says, mamma. I am sure he considers it right that this help should be given to Cyras."

"And what is your opinion, Gertrude?" demanded Lady Grace. "They are both your brothers; Charles in a nearer degree than Cyras."

"My opinion is, that it would be a sin not to help Cyras. If Charles is willing to do so, why oppose it, mamma? I only wish," she earnestly added, "that it was in my power to do it."

"Are you doing penance, Gertrude?" suddenly exclaimed a rich, mellow voice from the door of the room; and Gertrude rose laughingly to face Sir Everard Wilmot.

"I am not convinced," exclaimed Lady Grace. "You are both of you misled by your affection for Cyras. I wonder what you would say, Sir Everard?" And she put the case before him in a few words.

Sir Everard listened, and laughed a little. "That must have been Cyras I saw flying over the grass just now," he remarked. "Well, as to the matter under discussion: of course, it would be a very great sacrifice for Charley to have to delay his marriage; but—there are worse misfortunes at sea even than this."

He was so evidently amused that Lady Grace looked up.

"Undoubtedly Cyras must be helped. Four thousand pounds! Why, it's nothing; a mere bagatelle."

"To you it may be, Sir Everard," retorted Lady Grace, compressing her lips; "but not to others."

"Then suppose I take it upon myself," he laughed, in a tone which might be meant for jest or earnest. "Charley can keep his two thousand pounds in his own pocket."

"Charley is in debt himself, I'm afraid," severely remarked Lady Grace.

"No, I am not, mother," he answered, quickly. "It was all a mistake, and has been set right."

"I said it must be so," cried Gertrude.

Lord Avon and Cyras entered together; Cyras full of merriment. He had been enlightening the earl upon the whole past mystery, winding up his account with a humorous description of his interview with Miss Dynevor in Eaton Place. Lady Grace spoke a few words freely, which served to check the young man's laughter.

"What?" he exclaimed. "Charles is to hand over his savings to me and defer his marriage with Mary? No, that he shall not. Why, you can't think I would let him do it! I used to put upon Charley as a boy, but I will never do so as a man. I loved him then and I love him still."

"Not even to help you to the partnership, and to Miss Anna Jansen?" laughed Sir Everard.

"Not even for that. Not if it would help me to every good in the world. How on earth could it have entered anyone's head?"

"Do you remember me, Cyras?"

Cyras did not answer in words: only smiled, as he looked at Sir Everard. Their hands met in a warm clasp.

"Will you accept the money from me, Cyras?"

"From *you!*"

"You helped me once, though not with money. Suffer me to help you now."

"Don't fret yourselves into fiddlestrings, young people," spoke up

Lord Avon in his indifferent way from the depths of an easy chair. "I will see to Cyras."

"Not in this instance, Avon," said Sir Everard, decision in his tone. "Don't you understand that I owe him a debt, and that I would repay it?"

"I will take it as a loan from you," said Cyras, in a low tone of feeling.

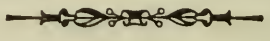
"All right," laughed the baronet. "Then it's all settled."

"And I hope you will make it the turning point in your life, Cyras," said Lady Grace, "and become as steady as Charles is."

Cyras laid down a spray of lilac he had brought in, and spoke with emotion. "I promise you that it shall be so—by the memory of my dead father."

Very shortly after this a double wedding took place in London; for Gertrude Baumgarten and Mary Dynevor were married together. Everything went off with great success, and Lord Avon gave Gertrude away. Cyras remained in England for it. He was in high form, and insisted upon kissing not only the brides in church, but the bridesmaids afterwards at the breakfast. He had squared up his accounts and would sail the following day for New Zealand, leaving a promise that when he came again his wife should be with him.

The Sub-Dean condescended to perform the marriage ceremony for both parties; and Miss Dynevor honoured the company in a new flaxen wig and a bird of paradise: a very magnificent specimen which Cyras had specially procured for her from some island in the Southern seas with an unpronounceable name.



MAY MARION.

Eyes of the softest shade of grey,
Lips that laugh in a winsome way,
Pink-white cheeks as merry as they,
And a pert proud chin that seems to say:
"You needn't go, but you must not stay"—
That's May Marion, that's my May.

Small white hands that hold me at bay,
Half in earnest and all in play;
Pretty looks that say me "nay,"
Prettier speeches that are loud with "yea;"
Smiles that solace and frowns that slay—
That's May Marion, well-a-day!

Merry and mischievous, grave and gay,
Marion, Marion, hear me, pray!
Loyal heart at your feet I lay—
Mine, be mine, for ever and aye!

G. C.

FRANK DADD. R. TAYLOR.

"By George, Lindrick," old Redburn had said to the Colonel, "it seems that you misled me about young Earle."

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1887.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AFTER "LIFE'S FITFUL FEVER."

IT wanted still some minutes to nine, when Vordenberg entered the shop in Wardour Street on Monday morning.

The bright morning light was pouring down on the dim street; cabs were rattling cheerfully along, sight-seers were gazing at the queer old things in the shop-windows. Gregg's door opened as usual to admit the early caller, and Gregg himself, looking half asleep, wished him good-morning as he passed through the shop.

The worthy couple had not returned from their country trip till past midnight. Country friends are proverbially hospitable, and they had come home in such a bemused condition that it was wonderful how they had contrived to find their way to bed. The foreign gentlemen upstairs had not yet rung for breakfast; and Mrs. Gregg, almost stupefied with headache, was just beginning to set about her morning work.

Instead of pausing in the shop, Vordenberg went upstairs to look round the room in which that terrible scene had been enacted last night. Some letter might probably have been left for him there. The door was shut. He turned the handle, and went in.

The first thing that seemed strange was that the paraffin lamp had not been extinguished, but was still burning with a steady, strong light. The blinds were still down, but the bright day came shining in, and there was something weird in this mingling of lights. A rapid glance round the room showed Vordenberg that one of the Poles had not kept his promise to depart. Stavieski was lying at full length on the sofa-bed, fast asleep.

Fast asleep! His friend's entrance was unheard. There was no movement, no sound of long-drawn breath, nothing but the most absolute stillness and repose. His features were always wasted and pale—poor Michael—but now, seen in that strong light, the face

looked like a fine copy of Michael's face, carved in ivory, without a wrinkle to mar its outlines. Vordenberg stopped short, and his heart gave a warning throb.

Going up close to that motionless figure, he laid his hand upon the breast. Michael was asleep indeed. After "life's fitful fever" there had come to him the boon of eternal rest.

As Vordenberg stood there beside his dead friend, he remembered that his last words to Michael had been angry words. And he recalled that parting look that Michael had given him and Paulina as they were leaving the room. It had been a look of sorrow and remorse. The better nature of the man had struggled through that burning desire for revenge which had withered up all that was good in his life. At the last, just at the very last, there had been granted to Stavieski a little time of repentance and regret.

As Vordenberg stood there, looking down quietly at the still face, he seemed to see a long procession of the friends of his youth passing by. His father came first, a shadowy figure whose features were faint and indistinct. Then came the Count Lorenski, gallant and strong, with head erect, and dauntless eyes, as if he were leading on a regiment of heroes to die for Poland. Then old Wouriski, venerable and feeble, his fur cap covering his grey hairs. Then Paul Stavieski, young, stalwart, handsome, with a proud glance and a firm step. Others followed; but Vordenberg could bear no more. He covered his eyes as if to shut out the sight of that spectral company, and groaned aloud in bitterness of heart.

Conquering himself at last, he bethought him of all that now remained to be done. A sealed letter, with his name on the cover, was lying on the table near the lamp. He opened and read it.

In a few words, written in his own language, John Wouriski described the manner of his companion's death :

After Vordenberg had left the room, he spoke but little, and seemed disinclined to begin the preparations for departure. Wouriski had urged him to make haste; but he did not care to move, and once he had murmured something about going on a longer journey than they had ever taken yet. Then suddenly, in a loud voice, he called his friend to his side, looked at him, pressed his hand, and sank back heavily on the sofa. Wouriski put some cordial to his lips; but all in vain. He never spoke again. The heart disease, under which he had laboured for years, had opened the doors of life's dreary prison, and set the captive free.

Two persons were pacing slowly up and down, under the great trees in the meadow in front of Ham House.

The fine old place was asleep in the sunshine and shadows of that golden afternoon. Through the trees gleamed the silver line of the river. From the silent old gardens came the scent of full-blown roses and honey-suckle, overpoweringly sweet; the ancient bricks

were hung with moss velvet, and heaped with ivy. In the centre of the lawn the grey river-god seemed to bask in the sunlight; the mullioned windows glittered, and the walls took a warmer red as the sun got low. From some such palace as this, the Sleeping Beauty must have come forth at her happy waking, and made her way through sweet tumbled grasses, and showers of falling blossoms—

"To that new world which is the old."

Beatrice was not afraid to enjoy her happiness now. She could walk silently beside Godwin, too joyous to talk much, with peace shining in her deep eyes.

How bewildering was the beauty of that place on a summer day! Silence, perfumes, beautiful green shadows, flashes of bright water, merry voices, mellowed by distance; all was like the realisation of some old dream of bliss!

Most girls have such dreams. Some never realise them at all. Others take late in life the joy that was denied to their early youth. These last are blessed; they accept their bliss with a calm heart and a thankful spirit. But still more blessed are those who enter their earthly Paradise with feet that have never been wearied with the long road, and souls that have been undarkened by the shadows of disappointment and regret. To Beatrice, in the bloom of her young womanhood, fate was kind.

She looked down on the daisies at her feet, and then up to the face by her side. Its expression was more tranquil than she had ever seen it before. Godwin could love now in happiness as well as in sorrow. He had the means of clearing his name. He could look the whole world in the face without the dread of a taunt or a sneer.

As he met the tender gaze of those blue eyes, he felt that she might read his heart. He was thinking of the great blessing of her true love, and the new life it had brought to him.

"My darling," he said, suddenly, "from the very first moment of our meeting, you became my good angel! What have I ever done to deserve you? Hundreds of better men long all their lives for such a gift as is bestowed upon me."

"Don't praise me too much," she answered, with a blush and smile. "Remember how many faults there are in me. Think of my impetuous, unconventional conduct at Fairbridge! I believe I should have died if I had stayed there; but of course I ought to have stayed."

"I can't think that you ought to have stayed. If it had not been for your 'impetuous conduct,' dear, I might never have found out the mystery of the necklace. It was one of your impulses which sent you to Vordenberg, and prompted you to open your heart to him."

"Yes, but I don't mean always to be guided by my impulses. When—when——"

"When you are married, child? Go on."

"It is not easy to go on, when one is ruthlessly interrupted," said Beatrice, with dignity. "When I am a matron, Godwin, I intend to be a quiet, self-restrained person. Just now you were saying something about a good angel. Don't you think that it is Mr. Vordenberg who deserves that name? We can never repay all that he has done for us."

"He is a wonderful man," replied Godwin, thoughtfully. "You know I have decided to leave the task of proving my innocence entirely in his hands. He asked this of me."

"You are right, quite right to let him do it in his own way," Beatrice spoke earnestly. "Depend upon it that anything he undertakes will be thoroughly done. What strange powers he has! And yet, although we all feel that there is something mysterious about him, we are never afraid to trust him."

"He is the best of friends," said Godwin, warmly. "As good a friend as Bassanio was to that poor devil of an Antonio. There is a shock in store for the Countess Gradizoff! If she only knew what was coming, I believe she would fly the country!"

"Aunt Jane will venture to love her boy again," said Beatrice, with a smile, remembering the sweet old woman. "I wonder if Aunt Dorothy will ever look on me graciously in time to come? You see, I shall never more appear in Fairbridge in the character of Mr. Redburn's adopted daughter. Miss Earle's favour was bestowed on the heiress, not on poor Beatrice Ward. But I think Aunt Jane liked me for my own sake."

"They will all like you for your own sake, by-and-bye. My uncle Charles is a just man, and when certain proofs are laid before him, he will act fairly. I have not, I confess, any strong affection for Uncle Charles, but I can rely on his sense of right. As to old Redburn's fortune, dear, we can do without it. Mr. Corder has plainly declared his intention of putting me in the place of his lost son."

Beatrice looked away to the old house, standing in the midst of fragrant shade and slowly-changing sunlight. She wanted to be quite certain that everything was real—these stately trees with their wealth of shadow and foliage—these afternoon glories filling up every space. Her eyes came back to her lover, happy, half-bewildered, wholly satisfied.

"Oh, how good everyone is to us!" said she, clasping her hands, with a pretty, childish gesture. "I am so glad, Godwin, that our money is not to come through me. Now it will be for you to bestow, and for me to receive. I never liked the idea of being an heiress while you were a poor man. Everything is going to be as it ought to be. And I am wicked enough to feel that I shall enjoy Mr. Redburn's discomfiture. Nothing will punish him more than to know that we really have no need of him."

They began to walk slowly back through the meadows to the river-

side, where the Miltons and Mr. Corder were awaiting them. Beatrice watched the river with a fixed, dreamy gaze, scarcely seeing the gay little boats that darted along, scarcely heeding the chance lights flashing on its tide. Foreboding clouds were far away; the world was full of happy promises. Godwin was hers, and she was his. Nothing could ever part them again.

When they reached the elder people, the girl stole up to Mr. Corder's side, and drew him gently away from the rest.

"If Godwin is to be your son," she said, "you will let me be your daughter, will you not? I will try to be all that you wish. I am not always proud and wayward as I was with Mr. Redburn. And I do want you to feel that I really love you."

The old man, who had had so many losses, looked into that fresh face, and felt that life had something in store for him yet.

"My dear," he answered, "I have already given you a daughter's place in my heart, and I thank God for your love. You and Godwin are sent to brighten the last years of a lonely man. We shall spend many happy days together, I believe, before I am called away. It is my wish that you shall be married very soon. But you must settle that with Godwin."

"What is that which she must settle with me?" asked Earle, coming up with a brightness that was new in him. "I think I can guess. Do you know, Beatrice, that Mr. Corder has already found a house that he says will suit us very well. You must take housekeeping lessons of Mrs. Milton without delay."

"She shall begin to-morrow," declared Harriet, firmly. "Her weak point is—dinner! She must learn to order things, and take an interest in the cookery-book."

"And she must acquire all the necessary knowledge as quickly as possible," said Mr. Corder, with a smile. "It will not take long to get the house ready."

"You frighten me," said Beatrice, running off to Richard Milton. And putting her hand within his arm, she asked in a whisper whether he were very anxious to send her away?

His answer dimmed the blue eyes for a moment with happy tears. And then, a straggling party, they all walked down-hill to the railway station, in the evening glow of that lovely day.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT MEADOW HOUSE.

One morning, when Meadow House and its grounds were bathed in the sunny calm of early day, Aunt Dorothy came out of her sleeping-room with a disturbed face.

She paused as she passed a corridor window, thickly framed in ivy,

and looked down into the garden with thoughtful eyes. Two ring-doves, perched on the grey sun-dial, were pecking grain out of Olga's hand. A great mass of white roses took the first freshness of the morning light; scarlet geraniums burned with a splendid glow in the shadows. Miss Earle loved the place better, perhaps, than she loved anything else on earth—loved every inch of that velvet sward, every brick in that ivy-grown wall that guarded her paradise from the outer world. In winter or summer she delighted in the view which she saw from that ivy-window, but to-day she could not look upon it with an untroubled gaze. Her peace had been ruffled by a letter.

Her conscience told her that this letter, which she was holding in her hand, ought to be a welcome thing. And she was glad, yes, she was honestly glad that her dead brother's only son was doing well in the world, and was able to clear his name. But the story of the necklace was an old story now, and she had hoped that the matter was buried and forgotten.

They had all done their best. Caroline's loss had been made good by the two sisters and their brother Charles. It had been neither pleasant nor easy to part with the money, but they had acted as they thought right, and Caroline had been satisfied. Time had subdued the bitterness which the disappearance of the necklace had caused. And although the Countess sometimes referred a little sentimentally to her husband's parting gift, she had ceased to bewail its loss.

And now the old affair was to be raked up again. The calm of life would be broken into by a solemn family gathering. Family gatherings often mean family rows. The Countess Gradizoff was matchless in a family row, and always got the best of everybody. Dorothy Earle was inwardly convinced that Caroline would be very terrible on the coming occasion.

"And I have got to tell Jane all about it," she thought, sighing. "And Jane is so nervous and excitable that this matter will make her really ill. She has not been quite herself since Miss Ward left the Lindricks in that extraordinary way. Dear me, it is all very bewildering and disagreeable!"

The sun was shining into the pretty old dining-room, lighting up its walls of panelled oak, and glittering on the silver and glass on the breakfast-table. A bowl of freshly-gathered roses sent out their perfume to greet Dorothy as she entered. Outside on the terrace was Jane, busy as usual with her beloved flowers.

Dorothy settled her mob-cap, which was not in the least awry, cleared her voice with a preparatory "Hem," and stepped slowly out of the open window to join her sister.

Jane was lingering over her large myrtle bush in a quiet ecstasy. She was in charity with the whole world. All her plants were flourishing. She was happy, and quite absorbed, just then, in her simple life. Later on, perhaps, when they were all sitting in the old drawing-room, and the sweet dusk was creeping round them, she would feel

a faint pang of remembrance. She had had many such pangs since that last talk with Beatrice on the ivy-grown bridge.

"What a morning, Dorothy!" she said, cheerfully, looking away down the long garden, with its glowing colours, and sweet, tremulous lights and shadows.

"Beautiful," replied the elder sister absently. "Jane, I want you to read these letters. But first I think I had better prepare your mind for their contents."

"Is there anything very dreadful in them?" asked poor Jane anxiously. "It does seem hard that any bad news should come on such a lovely day as this!"

"Nothing dreadful, of course. Dear me, Jane, I wish you would try to conquer your nervousness. You are not equal to the slightest shock, I see! Now do give me your attention, and be calm; I want you to understand everything before Caroline comes downstairs."

"I am listening, Dorothy," Jane answered meekly.

"The first letter is from Charles, and he encloses one which he has received from Godwin. It appears that Godwin is now able to clear himself from the suspicion that has been attached to him so long. The ruby necklace is found. Godwin desires us to appoint a day for a family meeting at this house; and Charles writes to say that Monday will suit him very well. But that is not all; it seems that Mr. Corder has adopted Godwin as a son, and he will be a rich man. How incredible it is!"

"But this is very good news," said Jane, with a tearful joy that made her look young again. "I thought from your face that it was bad."

"I cannot look at it as unmixed good. You do not realise the unpleasant scene that we shall have at this family meeting. I wish Godwin would just send back the necklace, and leave us to take his innocence for granted. But Charles does not seem to see it in that light. He says that the boy ought to have a fair hearing."

"Of course that is right," Jane ventured to say.

"It is right. But Charles does not live with Caroline, and we do. When Caroline gets excited the whole household is disquieted for weeks. Sweet peace—how one longs to preserve it!"

There was a dim notion floating through Jane's brain that peace ought not to be preserved at the expense of justice. But she had never been able to put her ideas readily into the form of words.

"Godwin wishes Mr. Redburn and Colonel Lindrick to be present at his vindication," Dorothy continued. "Charles has written to Colonel Lindrick, and fixed Monday for the meeting. I wish it were all over! What *will* Caroline say?"

"Why need we tell her directly?" said Jane, brightening at her own suggestion. "Why need we all be made uncomfortable till next Monday comes? To-day is only Wednesday. Let us wait until Sunday before we say anything to Caroline."

"Oh, that will not do. She ought to be told, of course."

"Then she will give us no rest till the day comes," sighed Jane, dismally.

"Well, we will see how she is this morning," said Dorothy, after a pause. "If she has one of her headaches it may be best, perhaps, to put off telling her for a little while. Here comes Olga; not a word in her hearing! I am going to ring for prayers."

The four maid-servants came in, and seated themselves demurely in a row at the end of the long room. Olga entered, and stationed herself next to Jane. Miss Earle opened her book, and then glanced expectantly towards the door. But Caroline did not appear.

Then Aunt Dorothy began to drone through the prayers, not without making several most unwonted blunders, which set poor Jane a-trembling on her knees and astonished Olga. The bees were droning, too, outside the window; the doves had fluttered softly down to the terrace, and were cooing an accompaniment to the old lady's monotonous voice. Even the religious exercises at Meadow House were of a drowsy kind. The Earles took care of their souls in a placid, decorous fashion that never changed with the changes of the times.

There was a soft rustle as they all rose from their knees. Olga approached Miss Earle, and saluted her waxen cheek with the usual morning kiss. "Mamma is not well this morning, Aunt Dorothy," she said. "Will you kindly send her breakfast upstairs? She really is not able to come down yet."

"I thought she looked as if she were going to have a headache last night," observed Jane, trying to repress an unsisterly thrill of joy. "Her eyes were so heavy. Did you not notice them, Dorothy?"

"I don't think I did," Miss Earle replied. "We will send up the tray at once. If your mother has many more of these attacks, Olga, I shall advise her to consult Doctor Bendall."

"She ought to see him," answered Olga rather carelessly. "Aunt Jane, I wish you would take me with you to Fairbridge this morning."

"No, Olga," Dorothy interposed. "You have neglected your piano lately. Spend an hour in practising. And then there are your other studies."

Miss Gradizoff's backwardness in acquiring accomplishments was a trouble to her aunts. They were fond of their niece, but she was more stupid and less good-looking than she ought to have been. From the Count, her father, she had inherited a Tartar cast of feature which the Earles could not admire. They were rather proud of their own beautiful old chiselled noses and dove-like eyes; and Olga was not like them in the least. It was a pity, as they used to say to each other.

The girl went off obediently to her tasks, without showing any temper. Left to themselves, the sisters exchanged a meaning glance. Dorothy stood, resting one thin white hand on the back of a chair.

"I can't possibly tell her anything to-day," she said at last. "These headaches are becoming very frequent, and they always leave her exhausted. Lately I have thought Caroline looking a good deal older."

"She does look older," Jane replied. "She will not wear as well as you and I have done. Poor Godwin—how proud he used to be of our appearance, Dorothy!"

"I really believe the boy admired us," admitted Miss Earle, not ill-pleased. "How extraordinary that Mr. Corder should have taken such a fancy to him! We never dreamt of such a thing. I suppose he will marry Miss Ward without much delay. But if all this could have been foreseen, he might have married Alma after all."

"I fancy he will be happier with Beatrice Ward," Jane said, musingly. "She is very young, and rather undisciplined, perhaps; but she is a girl that the Earles cannot possibly be ashamed of. And such beauty, you know! Quite an uncommon style."

"Charles will be charmed with her," Dorothy remarked. "If Godwin's name is really cleared, Mr. Redburn is sure to take the pair into favour. I was always very sorry, Jane, that the Lindricks knew anything about the necklace. We meant, of course, to keep the matter entirely to ourselves. But Olga babbled; one cannot trust that girl with the smallest secret!"

"It was not nice in Colonel Lindrick to set Mr. Redburn against the poor boy," Jane said, with unusual warmth. "Charles is evidently displeased about it. You see, Godwin has told Charles everything; and Mr. Corder must have written too."

"Yes, Charles speaks of having had a letter from Mr. Corder," rejoined Dorothy, thoughtfully. "It seems that there will be quite a long story to tell, and a great deal of evidence to bring forward. I am feeling rather unsettled, Jane. On the whole, I am glad we have decided not to say anything to Caroline just yet."

"She is really too ill to be excited, Dorothy. It would be most unwise to broach the subject at present. You will write to Charles to-day?"

"Yes; before Caroline comes downstairs. Of course I shall tell him that we are quite willing for the meeting to take place here on Monday. But, as I said just now, I shall be glad when it is over."

"It may not be as bad as we fear," said Jane, consolingly, as she went off to dress for her walk.

As Jane Earle took her way across the sunshiny meadows, keeping under the shade of the trees, she pondered over all the wonderful things that had happened this summer. In spite of her dread of Caroline, and all that she might do and say, there was happiness in her heart this morning.

Jane had kept her knowledge of Godwin's engagement locked up in her own bosom, till Beatrice's flight startled her into making a revelation. The part that the Lindricks had played had displeased

Dorothy as well as Jane. She thought it unfriendly in the Colonel to disclose a painful family matter to a stranger like Mr. Redburn. Ever since Miss Ward's hasty departure there had been a decided coolness between Meadow House and Oak Lodge. Even Alma, with all her tact, could not succeed in getting back to her old footing with the Earles.

The Countess Gradizoff had never been told why Beatrice had hurried away from the Lindricks' house. Her sisters always avoided making any references to Godwin in her hearing. And as Alma had never been very intimate with Caroline, no confidences were exchanged between them.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALMA LINDRICK.

When Jane was walking through the sunny old High-street of Fair bridge, one of the first acquaintances she met was Alma Lindrick, who came up, smiling, to greet her.

They met close to the old Gothic portal of the church; a low arched door, richly decked with ivy. Some shrill notes sung by melancholy boyish voices came drifting out into the street.

Alma was looking troubled and worn. She wore a delicate, cream-coloured gown, and her thin face was shaded by a broad hat with a pale-blue satin lining. Some years ago she might have looked fresh and pretty in such a costume, but to-day her dress seemed to make her prematurely faded and old. Jane was touched by her aspect, and spoke more cordially than usual.

"Papa has had a letter from Canon Earle," said Alma, after a few words about commonplace things. "It has surprised him very much. I suppose you know all about it?"

"Yes," Jane replied. "We heard from our brother this morning. Does Mr. Redburn mean to attend the meeting at our house on Monday?"

"He can hardly refuse to come. He, too, has had a note from the Canon. It seems to be quite a sensational affair; a great many disclosures are promised. Very odd, is it not?"

"It is unexpected," said Jane. "But, of course, we are very glad that the mystery is about to be cleared up."

"And the Countess—what does she say?"

"She is ill," answered Jane, gravely. "We have not told her anything yet. Her headaches are very severe, and her nerves are in an irritable state. I don't think it will be wise to mention the matter to her till Monday comes. We are quite concerned about her health."

"Certainly the Countess has not been looking well, lately. Dear Miss Jane, I think the world is full of invalids! Poor Beatrice Ward was ill after she left us so suddenly."

"Poor child; she had enough to make her ill," said Jane, warmly. "I suppose she will soon be married, now that Godwin is a rich man."

"Is he, indeed, a rich man?" Alma asked.

She spoke in a composed tone; but her face had perceptibly paled.

"Yes," Jane responded. "Mr. Corder—a very wealthy merchant—has taken him into partnership. I can't imagine Godwin having anything to do with trade; he is the first of the Earles who ever did. But everybody seems to go into business nowadays."

The two women parted, and as Alma walked away down the sunshiny street her heart was heavy within her. How differently she would have acted, if she could but have foreseen this change in Godwin's circumstances!

She felt sick and weary of everything that day. The air was full of sweet scents; tall white lilies were abloom in the prim little gardens in front of the old houses; the sleepy town was so still and bright that it seemed as if no change could ever come to such a tranquil, old-fashioned place.

She went on to the ivied bridge that spanned the river, and looked idly down at the green stems and leaves that were swaying with the ripple of its waters. The stream flashed merrily in the sunshine, singing its glad song. Godwin had liked this spot. He would bring his wife here some day. Perhaps his children would come and sail their toy-boats on this sparkling tide. The old house would be his; all the good things that had seemed withheld for ever would be freely poured at his feet.

Beatrice, in her simplicity, had been wiser than Alma, with her worldly wisdom. It sometimes happens that the romantic fool wins a prize that policy and discretion have missed. If Alma had had a little patience—if she had only been true a little longer to her old lover, she would have got the very things for which her soul had always pined.

Canon Earle's letters had spoiled all the Lindricks' plans, and filled them with confusion and dismay.

"By George, Lindrick," old Redburn had said to the Colonel, "it seems that you misled me about young Earle. He is prepared to prove his innocence—do you understand that? Confound it altogether, you have made me look like a fool!"

"This may be merely a piece of swagger," the Colonel had replied. "If his innocence could be proved, why wasn't it done sooner?"

But although he spoke coolly, Colonel Lindrick was ill at ease. Matters had taken an unexpected turn. His reputation for sagacity, which he had built up so carefully, was about to be shivered to atoms.

Old Redburn was a man who opened his purse-strings readily for

those whom he liked. And he had really felt a sincere liking for Lindrick, and had lent him money with no grudging spirit. But he was already beginning to regret his behaviour to Beatrice's lover; and if Godwin really came out of all his troubles with flying colours, old Redburn would be the first to acknowledge his mistake. Captain Ward's daughter was sure to be taken back to her place in his affections, and Alma's chance would be lost.

When Alma came home, tired and dispirited, from her walk, she found the old man sitting on the lawn in the sunshine. It was one of his good days, when his cough troubled him but little, and his aches and pains gave him a brief rest.

"You are looking fagged," he said, as Alma came to his side. "What a mistake your father has made about young Earle! Filled my mind with stories about him, so that I went up to town and asked him how he dared to propose to poor Ward's child. Wish I hadn't listened to a word of all those nonsensical tales."

"It was not papa's fault that you went up to town, Mr. Redburn," replied Alma, with a dignity that did her credit. "If he had known that you were going, he would have tried to keep you back. As to the suspicion that had clung to Godwin Earle, it was made known to us by his own relations. They were bitter enough against him once; but now that he is a rich man they will believe anything in his favour."

"Who says he is a rich man? That's another new tale."

"Miss Jane Earle says so. I met her this morning. She told me that Godwin had been taken into partnership by a wealthy merchant in London."

Mr. Redburn's face lengthened.

"Then the little puss will marry him without more ado!" he said, stroking his chin with a crestfallen air. "My Lady Beatrice will not want anything from me."

"Nothing," said Alma, briefly.

"She would not care to receive anything if I offered it?"

"I don't think she would. In fact I am sure she will never forgive you for coming between her and Godwin. I never saw any girl as much in love as she is. She is perfectly infatuated about that man."

"A poor melancholy-looking beggar!" Mr. Redburn said, with some spite.

"In her eyes he is a sort of demi-god. Nothing on earth will ever change her opinion of him."

"And nothing on earth will ever make me like him!" burst out the old man in a sudden fury of jealousy. "I owe them both some reparation, perhaps. I ought not to have said such things as I did say. Of course he will turn out to be not as black as he has been painted, and I shall have, in common decency, to make a sort of apology."

"It won't be difficult to do that," said Alma, soothingly. "There

will be a little scene—I think there's something stagey about the whole business—and then it will be all over. Beatrice will get married, and exist only for her husband. She will always hate you a little, I think, but she will be so fully occupied with loving, that she won't have time to hate anybody much."

"She is a fool," remarked old Redburn, courteously.

"I always thought so. But I think she is likely to be a happy fool. Don't you ever feel that it would be wise to forget her?"

"A little ungrateful noodle," he muttered, still fuming. "You have fifty times more sense than she has. And you have behaved very well to me, Alma—very well indeed."

"I like to behave well to you," responded Alma, sweetly. "I am not the kind of woman, you see, to fall over head and ears in love with any young man. It is not in me to be rapturous and devoted, and all that sort of thing. I never was romantic when I was a girl. And so I have some feeling to bestow on my friends, because I don't lavish it all on one person."

"I wish you had been poor Ward's daughter, instead of Beatrice! Upon my soul I do!"

Alma was discreetly silent, but her heart was beating very fast. The garden seemed to be asleep in the summer sunshine. Not a living soul was to be seen, and only the song of birds filled up this momentous pause.

"There's a decent lawyer fellow at Fairbridge, isn't there?" he asked, abruptly.

"Oh, yes." The tone was quite composed. "Our own lawyer, Mr. Graine, lives there."

"Well, I should like him to be sent for. And now, I think I've been sitting out here long enough. It's turning chilly, I fancy. One can't depend on this climate an hour. Where is Blake? Why the deuce does he always get out of the way when he's wanted?"

"He isn't far off. I will call him."

Beatrice herself could scarcely have gone springing towards the house with a lighter step. Miss Lindrick's eyes were so bright and her cheeks so flushed that the man-servant noticed the change in her He hurried across the lawn to his master, and she hastened indoors to her father.

A few minutes later the Colonel, in his dog-cart, was spinning along the road to Fairbridge.

Alma, standing at the window of her own room, watched him till the trees hid him from her sight, and then sank down into an easy chair to rest and think.

"It will all be mine soon; I am sure it will!" she mused. "Dr. Bendall feels persuaded that he won't last through the winter. If I am certain of his intentions, I shall think no more about the Barnicott match. It never was quite good enough."

She sat and dreamed about her future wealth, building all sorts of

magnificent castles in the air. And yet, splendid as those castles were, every one of them was as cold and empty as the palace of the Snow-Queen in the fairy tale.

She had ceased to want Godwin Earle back again; but she had never found anyone to put in his vacant place. Her love had not been worth having; it was a poor chilly thing at its best; but such as it was he had possessed it all. All her days, Alma knew that she should be always a little bored, a little dreary, just because she had never realised the dream of her youth.

Nevertheless, she was in excellent spirits when she went downstairs to meet her father and Mr. Graine. The lawyer stayed to luncheon, and went upstairs afterwards to receive old Redburn's instructions in his own room.

"He is very feeble— very feeble indeed, Miss Lindrick," said Graine, as he stood in the hall, waiting for the dog-cart to be brought round again to the door.

"Yes," replied Alma, with a gentle little shake of the head. "We are doing all we can, but we can't hope he will get stronger. It will be a sad summer to us, I am afraid."

"Ah, you mustn't look only on the dark side," said the lawyer, with a certain meaning in his tone that Alma caught at once. "You have a great many bright summers to look forward to. Good day, Miss Lindrick."

The Colonel drew his daughter into the library, and walked up and down with a radiant face.

"We have done a good day's work," he said. "You have managed things very cleverly, Alma. We shall have nothing to fear now from the results of this ridiculous meeting. By the way, do you mean to come and hear Earle's vindication?"

"I think I will," she answered, after a moment's thought. "It is as well to be as much as possible with Mr. Redburn. And I should really like to hear Godwin's explanation of this wonderful mystery!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

REVELATIONS.

As the week went on, Dorothy Earle grew more and more afraid of announcing the family meeting to Caroline.

The Countess Gradizoff was not exactly ill; but she was certainly growing thinner and older. The calm stagnant atmosphere that had preserved her old sisters in more than ordinary freshness, seemed to waste and wear the younger woman. Caroline was perfectly aware that Meadow House did not agree with her, but she was firmly determined to stay in it as long as she possibly could.

She was always civil to Dorothy. It was only to the unoffending Jane that she ever allowed her temper to show itself. Caroline was

a woman who could not live without a victim. But even with Jane she did not venture to go too far, because Miss Earle would sometimes come unexpectedly to the aid of her gentle sister.

Sunday came round, and nothing had been said about the terrible event of the morrow. All through church-time the two Miss Earles worried themselves with the fear that Miss Lindrick would say something to Caroline. But Alma, sitting alone in her pew, was entirely occupied with her own thoughts. Her father had stayed at home with Mr. Redburn, so that there was nothing to be dreaded from him. She did not join the Earles' party as they were leaving the church, and they went home congratulating themselves on an escape.

"She *must* be told to-day," said Dorothy, walking nervously into Jane's room, with her bonnet still upon her head. "They will all be here at eleven to-morrow; only think of it! I expect Charles will be here earlier. He will want to have a few words with us first."

"He is sure to come earlier. When Charles really is roused to exert himself, he does a great deal. Do you know, Dorothy, I think he is the right person to tell Caroline what is going to happen."

"Oh," said Miss Earle, much impressed.

"Yes," continued Jane, quite proud of her idea. "The letters went to him. Caroline was the loser of the necklace; it is clear, therefore, that he, as the head of the family, ought to speak to Caroline on such a serious matter. I wonder that we did not think of this sooner. It would have spared us a great deal of perplexity."

Miss Earle stood quite still, smoothing her dove-coloured satin bonnet-strings. A half-hoop of large diamonds, always coveted by the Countess, glittered on her delicate old hand.

"Well, all things considered, I think you are right," she rejoined slowly. "We will decide to leave it all to Charles."

Then these two cowardly old gentlewomen went downstairs to luncheon, and vied with each other in paying delicate attentions to "poor Caroline." Their consciences smote them pretty frequently for keeping silence when they ought to have spoken. And that was the reason why the Countess found them so attentive and kind.

There was another thought in both minds, which they did not utter even to each other. If the necklace was restored, uninjured, whole, without a single ruby missing, would not Caroline restore the money which had compensated her for its loss?

Monday morning came, and Dorothy blundered through the prayers in a way that made Jane turn cold. Caroline appeared just after they had all risen from their knees. They sat down to breakfast, and Miss Earle plunged wildly into the business of filling the cups. It was a funny repast, to which they all looked back afterwards as if they had partaken of it in a dream.

When they had all got up from the table, Caroline passed through an open window to the terrace. In another moment she swept into the room again with a surprised face.

"Here is Charles," she said. "He is coming up the drive in a fly. I wonder what brings him?"

"He is come on family business—he will explain it all to you," replied Dorothy, nervously. "We have left it to him."

"Family business?" repeated the Countess.

"Yes, yes; come into the drawing-room, Caroline. He will have a great deal to say to you."

"You are all so fussy and formal," said Caroline, rather crossly. "I daresay there is nothing in it, after all."

Canon Earle was as much like his sister Dorothy as it is possible for a man to be like a woman. He had the same purely cut features and soft white hair. His eyes were of the same clear grey as hers, but they were perhaps a little colder. He looked what he was—a church dignitary of the old school, clean-shaven, dainty and refined, with an old-fashioned courtliness of manner which always impressed people at once. Never was he anything but courtly, even when he said cutting things.

"We have said nothing to Caroline yet," murmured Dorothy, going up to him with evident nervousness. "We felt it would come best from you, Charles. Please prepare her at once."

If Canon Earle disliked his task, he did not shrink from it. He met the Countess with his usual charming smile.

"They have not told you the good news, Caroline," he began, easily. "Your necklace has been found at last. Godwin, poor boy, is coming here presently, with some of his friends. He naturally wants to prove his innocence."

But the news did not seem good to the Countess. She turned rather pale, and there came an unpleasant glitter into her eyes.

"Those who hide can find, Charles," she said, coldly.

"Ah, but I fancy Godwin will succeed even in convincing you that he did not hide anything of yours. He is prepared with the plainest proofs. That old merchant—poor Grace's father-in-law, you know—is coming with him."

"Old Corder!" cried Caroline, with horror. "In this house!"

"Why not? He could rank as a merchant prince if he liked. My dear sister, this is a levelling age; we can't succeed in keeping people on their old standing-ground. But probably this will be his first and last visit. Do you know that he has taken Godwin into partnership?"

"Charles," said the Countess, solemnly, "I can't think how you can be so blind. People who are rich can afford to prove anything. I daresay Godwin has paid somebody to confess the theft. It is awful—disgraceful! He will come here with a set of false witnesses, and you, a clergyman, will give him your countenance!"

There was something so dreadfully impressive in her look and tone, that Dorothy and Jane trembled. But the canon did not tremble in the least.

"I am not a fool, Caroline," he said, composedly. "Perhaps you will see, by-and-bye, that I do not give my support to anyone who can't justly claim it."

"What if I refuse to be present at this meeting?" the Countess demanded haughtily. "What if I say that I will not appear till these men are out of the house?"

"Why then, Caroline, we shall believe that, for certain reasons of your own, you are afraid to confront them."

At these words, very coolly and quietly uttered, the Countess grew still paler, and was silent.

The Lindricks and Mr. Redburn were the first to arrive. The Colonel was a little constrained; old Redburn gruff and sulky; but Alma came up with sweet words and a pleading smile.

"You won't send me away, Miss Earle?" she entreated. "I do so want to hear everything. We are so rejoiced to find that poor Godwin was misjudged. What mistakes there must have been!"

And then she fell back, and established herself by old Redburn's side. Dorothy and Jane were far too nervous to talk. They could not help casting anxious glances towards the windows. A little clock on the chimney-piece struck eleven. There was a sound of wheels upon the drive; two flys were coming up to the door.

"He is bringing troops of people," muttered Caroline, scornfully.

The first fly drew up to the terrace-steps. Godwin jumped out, and was followed by Mr. Corder, and a quiet-looking man with white hair. The second fly moved up; Vordenberg descended, and helped out a lady, small, and full of figure. A few seconds more, and these five persons were ushered into the room.

Canon Earle and Dorothy were standing near the entrance to receive them. As Godwin came in, his uncle grasped his hand warmly; and Dorothy held up her fair old face to be kissed. At that moment Jane, chancing to look at the Countess, saw that she had become white as death, and was grasping her daughter's arm.

"That man—that man!" Olga heard her say.

Vordenberg, tall and stately as ever, towered above everyone else in the room. What was this that Godwin was saying? Jane's head had begun to swim, and Dorothy was filled with hopeless bewilderment.

"Aunt Dorothy—let me introduce Count Gliska."

No wonder the canon received his nephew's friend so cordially; no wonder that the old ladies were so confused and surprised. The name that had just been spoken was well-known in wider circles than this—well-known and always revered. Not only for his misfortunes, but for his own remarkable gifts and blameless life, was Count Gliska honoured wherever his name was heard.

"Mr. Burnett," said Godwin, presenting the white-haired man, who bowed very quietly. Then the three Earles shook hands very graciously with Mr. Corder, and looked inquiringly at the veiled lady who kept somewhat in the background. But Godwin did not

mention her name. He gave her a chair, and she seated herself without a word. Nor did he bestow any greeting beyond a distant bow upon the Lindricks and old Redburn.

Caroline had sunk down into the corner of a couch, placed almost at the end of the long room. She had got her daughter's hand, and was holding it fast. Her face was still colourless; her breath came so quickly that Olga, frightened and astonished, looked round for a smelling-bottle. But the two elder sisters were absorbed; and Caroline had to struggle with her agitation alone.

"My friend Earle has promised," said Count Gliska (no longer Vordenberg), "to leave the task of his vindication in my hands. About myself, I have only a few words to say. After my escape from my enemies, I took refuge with my father's old friend in Vienna—a Mr. Vordenberg—and with him I spent several quiet years. He died, leaving me all that he possessed; and, for certain reasons of my own, I adopted his name when I came to England. It is not necessary to enter into those reasons at this moment, for they have nothing whatever to do with the matter which we have in hand. I am here to prove Godwin Earle's innocence of the crime that has been so wrongfully imputed to him; and the first witness I shall call is Mr. Burnett, the well-known jeweller and silversmith of Bond Street.

Thus summoned, the white-haired man came quietly forward. The Countess, still panting in her corner, gave Olga's hand a convulsive pressure that almost made the girl scream.

"It is exactly six years ago," Burnett began, "since a Russian nobleman, Count Gradizoff by name, came into my shop with an old customer of mine, who introduced him to me. The Count's errand was soon explained. He had come to dispose of a valuable ruby necklace. I invited him to step into my private room; and there the necklace was produced in the presence of myself and my partner."

He paused, and took out of his breast-pocket a flat leather case, which he held unopened in his hand.

"When the necklace was shown to me," he continued, "I recognised it at once as the one which had belonged to Count Gliska. Many years before, when I had had occasion to visit Warsaw, I had seen the Count, and had bought from him some old family plate. He had shown me his jewels, and I had minutely examined this necklace. The rubies are very fine—his initials are engraved on the clasp, which is a curious piece of workmanship."

Going towards a table, Burnett opened the case, and laid it down for everyone to see.

(To be concluded.)

IN A DANGEROUS STRAIT.

By Mary E. Penn.

THE close of a bright spring evening some eighteen years ago. A lingering ray of sunlight flickers across a quiet, suburban street, in the great manufacturing town of Hammerton, and slanting through the uncurtained window of an engraver's workroom, rests on the head of its occupant, bent low over his task.

He is a tall, slightly-built man of seven or eight and twenty, with a face full of intelligence and refinement; a firm but sweet-tempered mouth, and calm, luminous brown eyes, which have faced the world's frown without losing a whit of their brightness and courage.

The son of a struggling artist, who had left him no inheritance but debts and unsold pictures, Gilbert Haviland had early made acquaintance with those stern realities of life: poverty, toil, and care. They were his daily companions still, though latterly, his heart had opened to admit a guest whose presence robbed them of half their bitterness.

A fresh girlish voice in the next room was singing Dekker's brave old song, "The Happy Heart," and presently, a light footstep sounded outside the door, causing him to look round with an expectant smile.

"Oh sweet content!" sang the girl. "Honest labour wears a lovely face ——"

Then, putting in her pretty head of curly bronze-brown hair, she added:

"Doesn't the 'honest labourer' want his tea? It is quite ready."

"Presently, dear," he answered; "I have something to finish first."

"No; 'presently' will not do; there are crumpets, which don't improve with waiting," she said, as she entered, seeming to bring with her into the dingy work-room all the bloom and freshness of spring.

Gilbert's smile of tender admiration betrayed his heart's secret, as he glanced at the bright gipsy face, with its piquant combination of warm, sun-kissed complexion and blue eyes. No word of love had yet been spoken between himself and his cousin, Janet Ray, who at his mother's invitation had come to share their home when her father's death left her an orphan, a year ago. But he knew that the girl understood his heart as well as he did himself, and would be content to wait till he was in a position to claim her.

"Even the prospect of crumpets won't tempt me to leave this plate unfinished, but I have only a few touches to put in," he replied, as he shook back his hair, and rounded his shoulders to his task again.

"Very well; I shall wait for you," she said; and dragging a high leather-seated stool to his side, she perched herself upon it, leaning her elbows on the "bench."

"What is it you are doing? who is it for?" she asked, watching the tiny chips of metal as they curled up beneath his tool.

"An illustrated circular for Mapleton and Co. I am now, as you perceive, putting the finishing-touches to an extremely realistic tea-kettle."

Janet drew down her lips. "An ironmonger's circular! I did not know you accepted common work like that."

"Accept it? aye, and am glad to get it. The engraving trade is not what it was, Jeanie, before printing and lithography ruined it. Small craftsmen like myself can't afford to be proud."

She ruffled her pretty hair discontentedly.

"Whatever made you choose to be an engraver?"

"Well, there wasn't much choice in the matter. I drifted into it. You see I had never been trained for any trade or profession, for though, I got some notions of art from my father, he gave me no regular teaching. But I had picked up a knowledge of engraving from an old workman who lodged in our house; and when my poor father died, leaving the dear mother dependent on me, it seemed the only thing I could turn to with a prospect of success. That is how I came to be in a 'square hole' instead of a round one," he concluded, with a smiling glance at her.

"It is a shame!" Janet exclaimed, her sympathy all the keener for his patience. "You were not meant for this drudgery; you are a born artist, Gilbert. Look at your clever etchings; and your illustrations for the 'Warwickshire Messenger.'"

"With their queer perspective, and still queerer anatomy," he put in laughing. "No, no, Jeanie; you cannot blind me to the fact that years of study and practice are required before I can call myself an artist; so I must stick to the graver at present, and make the best of it. And now for tea and crumpets," he added, as he laid down his tool. "I shall work no more this evening, for Monsieur de Fontenay is coming."

"Again! This is the fourth time you have invited him within the last ten days, Gilbert."

"He invited himself this time, Jeanie. He said he had a proposal to make to me with reference to some drawings. I couldn't very well put him off, even had I wished to——"

"Which of course you did not," she interrupted resentfully. "I think that Frenchman has bewitched you, Gilbert. It is barely three months since you made his acquaintance through engraving a ring for him, and now you and he are hand-in-glove together. You are not usually so ready to make friends of strangers."

"Strangers are not usually so ready to prove themselves friends to me," Gilbert answered, turning away to gather his tools together.

Something peculiar in his tone struck Miss Ray's ear. "You speak as though you were under an obligation to him, Gilbert!"

"So I am—for his society. It is seldom I have an opportunity of talking to a man of his stamp—a cultured and accomplished gentleman. Why you dislike him I cannot imagine."

"I hardly know myself," she acknowledged; "but I do dislike and distrust him heartily, in spite of his culture and accomplishments; and I can't get it out of my mind that he has some hidden motive in coming here."

Gilbert glanced at her pretty face with a smile. She coloured and looked annoyed.

"Oh, it is not on my account that he began his visits here, if that is what you mean," she said resentfully. "He took to haunting your workroom, and inviting you to his house long before he saw me or your mother. I cannot divest myself of the feeling that there's a mystery about him which we can't fathom. Who and what is he, to begin with?"

"That is easily answered, Jeanie. He is a political refugee; the last surviving member of an old and noble family, noted for devotion to the House of Orleans, and therefore in bad odour with the present Imperial Government. I believe, in fact, that he has been concerned in a conspiracy against it, and still belongs to a secret Royalist Society."

"Ah; I saw him in the town the other day with an elderly Frenchman who looked very like a 'conspirator.'"

"Had he a cloak and lantern à la Guy Fawkes?"

"No; but he had an ugly sinister face, and a furtive sort of expression, as if he were accustomed to being watched," answered Jeanie. "M. de Fontenay and he were in such close confabulation that they did not see me pass. They were talking secrets, evidently—plotting, perhaps."

He laughed. "Very likely. But their plots are no business of ours, Jeanie."

"No—so long as you are not drawn into them. I have fancied lately—don't be angry, Gilbert—that there is a sort of secret understanding between you and M. de Fontenay; and I have feared ——"

"That I too was turning conspirator?" he suggested, with a look of amusement. "Make your mind quite easy on that score, my child. I never kept a secret in my life; at least ——"

He checked himself with some embarrassment, and left the sentence unfinished. Drawing her hand through his arm he led her away.

The curtains were closed, but the lamp was not yet lighted, when they entered the parlour; a homely little room enough, with its worn carpet and plain furniture, yet snug and cheerful, and bearing evidences of taste and refinement in the few well-chosen ornaments;

the open piano, the books and pictures, and the vase of spring flowers which adorned the daintily spread tea-table.

Near the window was a smaller table, strewed with the materials for embroidery; and in a low chair beside the hearth, sat Mrs. Haviland, a fair, refined, fragile-looking woman, with Gilbert's soft brown eyes and wavy hair.

"All in the dark, mother?" he said.

"Yes, dear; it is 'blindman's holiday,'" she answered, looking up with a smile. "Janet and I have been hard at work this afternoon, and Mr. Chasuble's altar-cloth is nearly finished. Light the lamp, Jeanie, and let Gilbert see it."

"In a moment; I have not put myself to rights yet," said Gilbert, as he left the room.

Janet lit the lamp and stood for a moment looking absently at the fire: then spoke suddenly.

"Auntie, did you know that Gilbert had a secret?"

"A secret, dear? What sort of secret?"

"I don't know, but I believe, from something in his manner, that M. de Fontenay is connected with it. I shall dislike that man more than ever if he is going to make Gilbert as reserved and mysterious as he is himself."

Mrs. Haviland smiled. "Poor M. de Fontenay! he is your *bête noire*, Jeanie. I must say you are rather unfair to him. So far from being mysterious, he seems to me particularly open and communicative. That is his ring," she added, as there was a summons at the front door; "now do, dear, try to be civil to him for once."

There was a sound of voices in the hall, and Gilbert entered, dressed for the evening, ushering in de Fontenay. He was a tall and strikingly distinguished looking man of three or four and thirty, with a clear olive complexion, a black moustache, and handsome bold dark eyes. He spoke English with the fluency of a native, and bore himself with the well-bred ease of a thorough man of the world.

As Janet noticed his cordial manner to Gilbert, and the gentle deference with which he greeted Mrs. Haviland, she felt half ashamed of her unreasonable antipathy; but it returned, strongly as ever, directly the bold dark eyes were turned upon her with that look of suppressed but passionate admiration which she resented as a tacit insult.

At the tea-table Janet scarcely spoke to him, keeping her eyes obstinately bent another way. He addressed his conversation chiefly to her companions, but she could see him watching her covertly, under his long dark lashes.

When the tray had been removed, he produced a folio he had brought with him, and unclosing it, showed that it contained a number of large mounted photographs.

"I want you, Haviland, when you have leisure," he said, "to do

me a series of etchings from these photos, which were taken from pictures in the gallery of the Château de Fontenay. You will be at a disadvantage in not having seen the originals, but those, alas! were sold and dispersed with the rest of my household gods when I became an exile and a wanderer."

"You have given me a very pleasant task," Gilbert replied; "and I will do my best to achieve it to your satisfaction. I see that there are some portraits among them."

"Yes—dead and gone de Fontenays. You need not copy those; I don't care enough for my ancestors to make them interesting."

"You have preserved the family type," Gilbert said, smiling. "This"—indicating a half-length figure in the costume of the Grand Monarque's days—"might be yourself in fancy dress."

He glanced at it and laughed. "I am flattered by the resemblance. That is Baron Enguerraud de Fontenay, one of the blackest sheep in the family flock—and there have been not a few among us," he added, coolly. "We are a reckless, spendthrift, ne'er-do-well stock, we de Fontenays, though we have somehow managed in all our follies to keep honour intact. 'Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur,' might be our motto."

"An unsullied name is an inheritance to be proud of," observed Mrs. Haviland.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Unfortunately one cannot live on it, madame," he answered cynically. "'When lands are gone, and money spent,' as the old song says, honour is but a barren heritage. That is enough of pictures for the present. Will Mademoiselle Jeanne oblige us with a little music?"

Jeanie shook her head. "I could not venture to play before so accomplished a musician as yourself, monsieur."

He did not press her, but, taking his seat at the piano, struck a few masterly chords, then glided into the "Moonlight Sonata."

Attracted, in spite of herself, by the exquisite music, Janet approached, and stood watching the slender but powerful fingers, on one of which a great ruby gleamed, blood red.

Presently, without removing his hands from the keys, he glanced round at Gilbert and his mother. They were still absorbed in the pictures and talking with animation.

"What a pleasant, peaceful home interior!" he murmured, keeping up a subdued ripple of accompaniment. "A haven of rest, it seems, to a storm-tossed wanderer like myself. Every form of what the world calls pleasure I have known, but the joys of home—never, or I might have been a better man."

"Perhaps you would have found them insipid," she said.

He smiled rather bitterly. "I understand you: you think me incapable of appreciating innocent pleasures—you may even doubt my capacity for affection. But there you are wrong. World-hardened as I am, I can still love, deeply, passionately; and for the

loved one I would do and dare all. I would sacrifice fortune, honour, life itself, in her service."

His voice barely rose above a whisper, but there was a thrill of passionate earnestness in it which startled Jeanie. She drew back and answered coldly:

"That sounds well, monsieur; but it seldom happens in real life that a man is called upon to make any such sacrifices. The affection best worth having is that which will stand the test of daily companionship; which shows itself in little unobtrusive acts of kindness, in patience and tenderness and self-abnegation."

Involuntarily she glanced towards Gilbert. Her listener frowned, and played a jarring discord.

"Such ideal perfection is beyond me," he returned. "And yet, if a woman cared for me enough to bear with my faults, she might find some good in me still. Her influence might raise me to a higher level, and I might learn to live worthily for her sweet sake."

There was a moment's silence. Janet dared not look at him, but she felt that his dark eyes were riveted on her face with a gaze which seemed to magnetise her.

Suddenly he changed his position, and played the introductory symphony of a song, the "Chanson de Tortunio:"—

> Si je vous le disais, pourtant, que je vous aime,
> Qui sait, brune aux yeux bleus, ce que vous en diriez.

As his mellow baritone voice lingered on the last words, she involuntarily glanced at him; but the look she encountered made her eyes quickly droop again, and brought a hot flush of colour to her cheeks.

"Jeanne, I love you!" he breathed, in a quick, passionate undertone; and, affecting to pick up a loose sheet of music, he stooped and laid his lips to her hand.

The girl started and snatched it away.

"Do not shrink from me, my sweetest," he pleaded, in the same suppressed but vehement tone. "Tell me that I may hope; tell me that you will——"

"Oh, no—it is impossible!" she interrupted hurriedly. "Please say no more; you only distress me."

His face changed, an expression crossing it which made it almost menacing.

"So be it; I am silenced," he said in an altered voice. "Yet it might have been better had you listened to me; better for you—and for someone else also. It is safer to have me for a friend than a rival."

The girl threw up her head and looked at him defiantly.

"Is that a threat, monsieur?"

"No, merely a warning," he replied, as he rose and left the piano.

"You have given us a treat, M. de Fontenay," Mrs. Haviland said, looking up; "but I fear Gilbert has been sadly inattentive to your music. He is fascinated by these pictures."

"By the way, Haviland, I find there is one I have omitted to bring," their visitor remarked—"not a photograph, but an engraving, which I wish to have copied in facsimile. However, you will see it when next you call. Suppose you come and dine with me to-morrow evening, if you have no other engagement. And now," he continued, "I will take my leave. Au revoir, madame, and thanks for a delightful evening."

He shook hands with her cordially, but to Janet he merely bowed, with an exaggerated deference in which there seemed a touch of irony.

When Gilbert returned to the sitting-room after showing out their guest, he found his cousin alone. She was standing at the table, looking absently at the scattered photographs.

"Congratulate me on my good fortune, Jeanie," he began. "This commission gives me just the sort of work I was longing for."

"I am pleased you have the commission, but sorry it came from M. de Fontenay," she replied.

"Oh, you are incorrigible!" he exclaimed, in a tone of vexation. "Will it remove your prejudice against him, Jeanie, if I tell you that he saved me from ruin?"

She started, looking at him in wondering inquiry. He nodded gravely.

"It is a fact. To explain it I must tell you what I have hitherto kept a secret, even from my mother. Ever since my father died, Janet, I have been struggling under a debt, which, Quixotically perhaps, I took upon myself to save his memory from dishonour. The money had been borrowed from Screwton, the attorney, who promised to give me time to repay it in instalments. About a month ago, however, he came down upon me by demanding payment in full, under a threat of legal proceedings. I was at my wits' end, not knowing where to turn for help, when de Fontenay came to my rescue ——"

"How did he know of it?" interrupted Janet.

"He heard of it from Screwton—he knows him. De Fontenay, in the most delicate and friendly manner, came to me with an offer of assistance. He would not hear of my refusing it; he insisted upon advancing me sufficient money to discharge the debt in full."

Janet drew in her lips, looking perplexed and uneasy.

"Did it strike you that such generosity was extraordinary on the part of a comparative stranger?"

"It would have been from anyone else; but de Fontenay is liberal and open-handed to a fault."

"So now he is your creditor instead of Mr. Screwton? I would rather you were in the attorney's power than his, Gilbert. How much was the debt?"

"Three hundred pounds."

She uttered an exclamation of dismay. "When shall you be able to repay it?"

"In time—and de Fontenay is not likely to hurry me," he said cheerfully. "I feel that I have it in me to succeed, Janet, if I can only get a start in the right groove. This commission of his may be the first step towards that brilliant future you are so fond of predicting for me."

He stole an arm round her waist and drew her to his side. "You know for whose sake I am anxious to succeed," he whispered, looking down at her with tender seriousness. "I have never before put my hopes into words, but I think you have guessed them, Jeanie?"

"Yes," she said simply.

But even as her sweet lips met his, and they took their first long, lingering kiss of love, Janet shivered with a vague foreboding of coming trouble.

II.

THOUGH M. de Fontenay was fond of alluding to himself as a poor man, there were no signs of poverty in his manner of living. The house which he had taken, when he settled in Hammerton, some six months before making Gilbert's acquaintance, was a large and handsome one, standing in an aristocratic suburb of the town.

The "Priory," as it was called, a comparatively old house, was a square, substantial building, of mellow-tinted red brick, so thickly sheltered by trees and shrubs as to be invisible from the road; and though its exterior was typically English, in its look of solid respectability, it was as thoroughly French inside as if it had been transported bodily from the environs of Paris. M. de Fontenay's fastidious taste was shown in the rich but subdued elegance of the furniture and decorations.

Gilbert Haviland proceeded to keep his dinner engagement at the appointed hour, and was admitted by an English footman; but M. de Fontenay's valet, and confidential servant, Luigi—a soft-voiced, obsequious Italian—came forward to relieve him of his hat and overcoat, and usher him into the "salon." It was a long, lofty room on the ground floor, with furniture of inlaid ebony; panelled walls, a polished floor, and two tall windows draped with olive-green plush.

To his surprise, for he had expected to dine tête-à-tête with his host, he found two other visitors present, who were introduced to him respectively as the Vicomte de Sanzac and Monsieur Docquois. The former, a young man, was a type of a Parisian dandy of the "Third Empire;" with a handsome but dissipated face, a waxed moustache, a glass screwed into his eye, and an expression of amiable self-sufficiency.

Docquois, whom Gilbert fancied he recognised as Janet's "con-

spirator," was a haggard, sallow-complexioned man of forty ; his eyes were dark and restless, with a sullen, lowering look, which certainly merited the description, "sinister." The two guests were as great a contrast in manner as in appearance, the Vicomte being just as talkative and expansive as M. Docquois was taciturn and reserved.

They were alike, however, in the marked deference with which they treated their host, and also in the close and curious scrutiny which they bestowed on Gilbert himself.

Glancing towards them as he exchanged a few words with de Fontenay, he found Docquois watching him furtively under his heavy brows, while the Vicomte, twirling his waxed moustache surveyed him from head to foot with undisguised curiosity. Feeling somewhat uncomfortable under this fire of eyes, he was not sorry when dinner was announced, and they crossed the hall to the dining-room.

"Monsieur Docquois understands but does not speak English, so I shall put you near de Sanzac, who will be charmed to show off his knowledge of your language," the host said, as they took their places at the perfectly appointed dinner-table, with its glittering array of glass and silver. "Convince him if you can that the sun does sometimes shine in this foggy island."

"There is a week I have been in England, and every day it has rained more or less, generally more," remarked the Vicomte.

"April is usually a rainy month, even in France, is it not?" Gilbert asked, good-temperedly.

The other shrugged his shoulders. "Cher Monsieur, I adore England ; but your climate gives me the horrors."

"I may plead that we have learned how to indemnify ourselves for its defects by home comforts," said Gilbert smiling.

"Oh, you have a genius for 'le confort,' I admit ; but for me, look you, I am a child of the south. Sunlight is as necessary to my happiness as ——"

"As pretty women and good wine, for example," put in M. de Fontenay. "Apropos—try my Xères, Vicomte."

M. Docquois, who was supping his soup noisily from the end of his spoon, glanced at the sprightly Vicomte with an unpleasant smile. "You have just narrowly escaped being deprived of the materials for happiness for some time to come," he said sneeringly.

"True ; but under those painful circumstances I should at least have enjoyed the consolation of your society, mon cher," the other replied quickly and coolly ; "and such genial companionship might make even a prison endurable."

Gilbert raised his head with an involuntary look of surprised inquiry, which M. de Fontenay answered.

"Ah, my dear Haviland, in spite of its climate, England is a happy country," he said. "You may not have sunshine, but you have freedom ; freedom, social, religious and political. Every man can speak the thing he thinks, without danger of finding himself

within prison walls—as our friend here would have done, but for his timely trip across the Channel."

De Sanzac laughed and filled his glass.

"You see what a dangerous character you have for a neighbour, M. Haviland," he remarked lightly. "We make no stranger of you," he added, in a curious tone; "we know that you will not betray us."

"Oh, there is no fear of that," de Fontenay said quietly, and changed the subject.

In spite of the host's geniality and the conversational powers of one of the guests, the dinner was not a success. Gilbert felt unaccountably constrained and ill-at-ease, and it was a relief to him when they adjourned for cigars to the study.

The latter apartment had been built by the present tenant, and was connected with the other part of the house by a long corridor with a padded door at each end. It was a spacious but somewhat gloomy room, lined on three sides with bookshelves; it had heavy oak furniture, a wide open fire-place, and an elaborately carved chimney-piece. In a recess at one end stood an exquisite statue of Psyche, a copy from the antique; its marble whiteness gleaming coldly against the dark background.

After the warm and brilliant dining-room the place looked chill and sombre, lighted only by a shaded lamp on the reading-table, which cast a bright circle of radiance on the scattered books and papers, leaving the corners of the room in shadowy obscurity.

The discreet Luigi brought in a tray containing coffee, cognac and liqueurs, placed another log of wood on the hearth (M. de Fontenay abjured both coal and gas) and retired noiselessly as he had come.

"That fellow comes and goes like a ghost," observed de Sanzac, as he rolled a fresh cigarette.

"Or like a spy," growled Docquois, giving his coffee a liberal "bracing" of cognac. "I don't like your model valet, de Fontenay. He is too sly and cat-footed for me."

"Luigi? Oh, he is an excellent fellow, and the best servant in the world. But he has a trick of leaving the door open. Vicomte, will you oblige me by seeing if it is shut?"

De Sanzac glanced at him, then smiled and crossed the room to the door, which was screened by a tapestry *portière*.

Gilbert fancied—it could only have been fancy—that he heard the click of a key in the lock as the young Frenchman put his hand under the curtain.

"All right," he said jauntily, coming back with his hands in his pockets. "We can talk secrets without danger of eaves-droppers."

"Oh, we are not going to talk secrets," the master of the house replied, as he pushed the cigar-stand towards Gilbert. "Though there is a little matter of business between Mr. Haviland and myself

which may as well be settled now as later. I have been thinking," he continued, addressing the engraver, "that it might be more satisfactory to have our agreement about the etchings in writing. You are contented with the terms I proposed when we parted last night?"

"More than contented; they are far too liberal," said Gilbert.

"On the contrary, in accepting them you leave me your debtor," was the courteous reply, as de Fontenay opened a writing case on the table. "Then will you kindly put your signature to this memorandum? You see," he added laughing, "I am nothing if not business-like—the result of my residence in England, I suppose."

The young man took the paper from his hand, and was about to affix his signature without looking at the contents when his friend interrupted him. "My good fellow, have I to teach you, a practical, cautious Englishman, never to sign a document without reading it? Why even our feather-brained de Sanzac would know better than that."

Gilbert laughed, and putting up his eyeglass glanced through the memorandum. "It is perfectly correct," he said, as he dipped his pen in the ink. At the same moment, the vivacious Vicomte, stretching across to reach the cognac bottle, contrived to upset his coffee, which poured in a stream across the table.

"*Maladroit!*" exclaimed the host, springing to his feet to avoid being inundated.

"I beg ten thousand pardons," drawled the other, who, however did not seem much disconcerted by his mishap.

"There is no great harm done," rejoined de Fontenay; "I will ring for Luigi presently. What has become of the memorandum?—Oh, here it is, on the floor," he added, stooping to pick it up.

Without looking at it again, Gilbert signed his name and handed him the paper.

"So—that is settled," de Fontenay said with a satisfied smile, and a glance at the other two, who were smiling also. "And now," he continued, "I will show you the engraving I mentioned, which you have kindly promised to copy for me. It has no particular merit as a work of art, but there are circumstances which render it particularly interesting and valuable—as my friends can tell you."

"*Parbleu!*" muttered Docquois, with his ill-favoured smile; while the Vicomte, who seemed to have had quite as much wine as was good for him, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Interesting and valuable!" he echoed, when he could speak: "I believe you! Show me the work of art which comes up to it. But let us see this treasure, de Fontenay. Where do you keep it?—In an iron safe? In a jewelled shrine?"

"No," said the other calmly; "I keep it—in my purse," and opening his porte-monnaie he drew out a folded paper which he tossed across the table to Gilbert.

The other two approached and watched the young man curiously

as he bent towards the light of the lamp and examined it, holding it close to his short-sighted eyes.

He uttered an involuntary exclamation of surprise, and looked up at his friend. "You are joking, of course," he said with a smile.

"I never was more serious," replied the latter, whose face was indeed grave and stern enough now.

Gilbert glanced bewilderingly at the paper again. "But—I don't understand," he stammered. "This is a Bank of England note for a thousand pounds."

"Exactly," the Frenchman rejoined; "and that is the 'engraving' which you have promised to copy in facsimile."

The young man started, and rose to his feet, his eyes dilating with a sudden horrible suspicion. "Good heavens! you do not mean ——"

"I mean precisely what I say," de Fontenay interrupted with imperturbable calmness. "You will not deny your promise, I suppose? Here it is, in black and white. You agree to join our fraternity, and to place your professional skill at our service for a consideration, which is specified."

"That is not the paper I read."

"That is the paper you signed. See, here is your name, with the ink scarcely dry upon it."

"Then you substituted that for the other," Gilbert said quickly. "Ah!" he added with sudden enlightenment. "I understand it all now! This is the climax of a deep-laid scheme. It was for this you played the comedy of friendship, and got me into your power—to make me your tool and accomplice. I was to turn forger to oblige you! You must have been mad to think I should consent."

"It is you who are the madman if you refuse," muttered Docquois in a tone of menace there was no mistaking.

De Fontenay silenced him by a gesture.

"My dear Haviland," he said, in a voice of friendly remonstrance, "I think you scarcely understand your position. If you reflect, you will see that you have no alternative but to yield. You are at my mercy. I can ruin you, for this agreement is so worded that I can make use of it against you without compromising myself——"

"Before you had time to do so, I should denounce you as an impostor and a felon," struck in Gilbert, courageously.

"Excuse me; a felon I may be, but an impostor I am not. That I am a spendthrift and a gambler is pretty well known to my friends; but that I have descended to crime in order to avoid the misery and humiliation of poverty is, as yet, my own secret. Denounce me if you like, and see who will believe, on *your* word, that Raoul de Fontenay is a 'felon.'"

"Oh, M. Haviland will do nothing so imprudent; he will make a virtue of necessity, and become one of us," spoke de Sanzac, rolling a fresh cigarette. "You must not confound us with vulgar

faussaires, M. Haviland; our workmen are artists in their way, and our agents belong to a rank of life which places them above suspicion. It happens that we are at present in want of an engraver, the post having become vacant through the—a—temporary retirement of one of our confrères—a retirement which Docquois and I were very near sharing by the way," he added with a laugh. "It is a brilliant opportunity for you, as we are just now breaking fresh ground, having at length succeeded in imitating the peculiar texture of the Bank of England paper; and that's the whole story. The work is simple, the remuneration munificent. You accept—yes?"

Gilbert drew a deep breath, and glanced at the master of the house, who, during his friend's fluent harangue had been standing with his arms folded.

He met the young man's eyes with a sombre smile. "Well," he said, "you do not speak. Are we to understand that you consent?"

"You are to understand," the young Englishman replied, all his nerves thrilling with excitement, "that I would rather cut off my right hand than use it in your service. And now you will allow me to go."

As he turned to leave the room, words from de Fontenay arrested him. "The door is locked and the key in my pocket," he said, deliberately.

"Open it, sir, or I will rouse the house!" said Gilbert.

"You may shout till you are hoarse; no sound will pass the walls of this room," returned de Fontenay coolly. "It was built to hold a secret, and nothing that could compromise us has ever escaped it. The grave itself is not more discreet."

Gilbert understood the veiled menace; he felt that he turned pale, but he answered in a tone of contemptuous indifference: "Your threat does not alarm me, Monsieur de Fontenay; you would scarcely be so mad as to attempt my life, knowing that if I disappeared this house would be the first place searched for me."

"It might be searched from garret to basement and no trace of you would be found, were it necessary for our safety that you should 'disappear.' See here."

He walked to the statue of Psyche, and drawing out the movable pedestal on which it stood, pressed a concealed spring in the panelled niche. Instantly a door flew open, revealing a cupboard or closet, about the height of a man, but not more than two feet deep, contrived in the thickness of the wall. Taking up the lamp, he threw its light into the recess, which contained a few papers and a small iron safe; then he glanced over his shoulder at Gilbert.

"Do you understand?" he asked, with the same dark smile. "While the police were searching for you, while pretty Jeanne was lamenting you, while your friends and enemies were putting their own construction on your disappearance, you would be here—safely gagged and bound, and left to suffocate at your leisure."

The young man gasped as if he were already suffocating. The horror of the idea overpowered him.

De Fontenay advanced a step nearer to him, lowering his voice. "And while you were lying perdu here, mon ami, it should be my pleasant task to console that sweet young demoiselle—not a very difficult one, I fancy. She might mourn for you at first, but she would soon learn to forget you—in my arms."

Before he could utter another word, Gilbert lifted his hand, and struck him in the face. Then, with the energy of desperation he dashed across the room, and seized the bell-rope.

Quick as he was, Docquois, who had been watching him closely, anticipated the movement, and snatched it from him. The two men struggled for a moment, when Gilbert, catching his foot in the hearth-rug, fell heavily, dragging his assailant with him. At the same instant de Sanzac uttered a hasty exclamation.

"Hush—what was that?" he breathed. "Someone is at the door!"

Docquois started to his feet; but Gilbert, whose head had struck the fender in his fall, rose with difficulty.

"Keep him quiet—do you hear?" de Fontenay said in a hurried whisper to Docquois.

His confederate nodded. Gilbert, who, dazed and giddy, had sunk into a chair, felt a cold touch on his temple—the steel barrel of a revolver, which the Frenchman was holding to his head.

"Who is there?" de Fontenay demanded, through the door, which was being knocked at.

"It is I, Monsieur," his valet's voice replied. "A gentleman desires to see you."

His master unlocked the door, and opened it a few inches.

"A gentleman?" he repeated; "a visitor at this hour! Who is it? what name does he give?"

"None, Monsieur. He says that he is a stranger to you, but that he comes on urgent business ——"

"On business so urgent that it cannot be delayed for a moment, M. de Fontenay," put in another voice; and the door was thrust open, and two strangers made a sudden irruption into the room.

"*Mille tonnerres!*" shouted Docquois; "the police!"

"Just so," replied the first speaker, a tall burly man of middle age, whom Gilbert recognised as the local superintendent; "and to save you the fatigue of useless resistance I may mention that my men are here, within call, and that the house is also guarded outside, back and front. This is the man, is it not?" he continued, indicating de Fontenay, as he turned to his companion, who wore a moustache and imperial, and a tight-waisted frock-coat.

"Yes, that is our bird," the French detective replied airily, "and a knowing one he is. It has been a ticklish business to catch him;

but he is in the net at last. The other two are ours also, but the third I don't know. Is he one of the gang?"

The question was addressed to Luigi, who stood in the background, an interested and attentive spectator of the scene.

"*Questo è certo!*—he is one of them, or he would not be here," replied the valet, coming forward. "He is an engraver, and has been at the house frequently of late."

De Fontenay turned a strange look on his favourite servant. "So, Luigi, it is you who have betrayed me?" he said quietly.

"With profound regret, and as part of my professional duty, signor, si," the Italian answered, with his usual obsequiousness. "I did not think it necessary to say, when I entered your excellency's service, that I was employed by the police to watch you."

"The game is up then," his master said, with a shrug.

"Yes, the game is up," Gilbert echoed, shaking off his torpor and rising; "for what your servant does not know, I can tell."

"That, by heaven, you shall not!" Docquois interposed, with a furious oath. "One spy and informer is enough for us."

He raised his revolver to Gilbert as he spoke, but de Fontenay caught his arm. "No bloodshed," he said peremptorily; "it will only make matters worse."

As the other jerked his wrist away, there was a sharp report, and de Fontenay staggered back from him, putting his hand to his side.

"You have killed him!" exclaimed de Sanzac with emotion, speaking for the first time since the detectives had entered the room; and he hurried to his friend's assistance.

"I — it is nothing," de Fontenay gasped, though he had turned lividly pale. "If you had wished to serve me, Docquois, you would have taken better aim," he added, with a bitter smile.

"I would rather shoot myself than you, you know that," the latter answered hoarsely. "It was a miserable accident."

"To avoid further accidents, M. Docquois," said the French "agent," blandly, producing a pair of handcuffs from his pocket, "perhaps you will allow me to put on these little ornaments? *Ca y est!* You also, M. le Vicomte, if you please—thousand thanks! As to this gentleman, who is English, I think we have a warrant for his arrest on Mr. Luigi's information. He——"

"Pray allow me to explain!" hastily interrupted Gilbert. "I have no connection whatever with these men; I was entrapped into their company by false——"

"You will have an opportunity of explaining all that before the magistrate to-morrow," struck in the superintendent brusquely; "in the meantime, sir, if you take my advice, you will hold your tongue, and come quietly with us. Now M. de Fontenay, if you are ready—why, what's this?" M. de Fontenay had almost fallen from his chair; his hands were hanging, his head drooped on his breast.

"He is fainting!" exclaimed de Sanzac.

"He is dying," whispered the French detective with sudden gravity, as he raised the drooping face.

Luigi approached, and helped to lift his betrayed and wounded master on to the couch, loosened his cravat and unfastened his waistcoat. De Fontenay had not lost consciousness; his eyes were wide open, and unnaturally bright, but his features looked pinched and drawn, and his rich olive complexion had faded to an ashen pallor. Docquois stood, the image of distress.

"No cause for a long face," spoke de Fontenay to him, with a haggard smile, as he feebly strove to repulse Luigi. "You never did me a better turn than by that chance shot, Docquois, my good friend. No, don't touch me; let me die in peace. But first——" His eyes wandered round till they rested on Gilbert; then he turned, and addressed the superintendent, who was standing near the couch.

"Sir, I have a statement to make which will clear an innocent man from unjust suspicion. Mr. Haviland spoke the truth just now; he—but let it be taken down in writing," he broke off, "and quickly, for my moments are counted."

Clearly and collectedly, though in a voice which grew fainter with every word, he made his confession, and affixed a trembling signature.

Then he looked wistfully at Gilbert again, and the latter crossed the room to his side.

"Haviland, will you forgive me?" he faltered. "I did not mean my threats just now. Villain though I may have been, I am not a murderer; believe that."

Without a word the young man gave him his hand.

"Thanks," he said, his lips parting in a faint smile. "You are a good fellow. You deserve to be happy, and you will be—happy and prosperous with—with the woman you love. Tell her from me that ——"

His voice sank so low that the rest of the sentence was inaudible. "Jeanne—'brune aux yeux bleus,'" he muttered; and with a long shivering sigh, fell back on the pillows, dead.

De Fontenay's prophecy was realised. Gilbert Haviland was happy in due course of time, and very prosperous. He is now one of the most popular illustrators of our periodical literature.

Janet and he have partly forgotten the shadows and trials of the past. "But I can never forget the horror of that night, as you related it to me, Gilbert," she says to him sometimes, with a shudder.

"I cannot regret it, when it served to draw us more closely together, my darling," her husband answers tenderly. "All the same, I hope it may never again be my lot to find myself in so dangerous a strait."

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Under Northern Skies," etc., etc.

Palma, May, 1887.

An "Instantaneous" Effect.

My Dear E.— It is the unexpected which happens. Once more I date to you from Palma de Mallorca. Had anyone said when I last left these shores that before many months were over I should see them again, I must have written False Prophet to his name. Yet it has come to pass. Once again I am in Palma de Mallorca; reviving old influences (old with the age of months only), recalling old scenes.

My last letter I concluded and posted in Barcelona, after they had barbarously kept us waiting three hours and a half on board our steamer (we christened it the *Tantalus*), whilst they landed the Mallorcan pigs, safely if not always soundly. And if pigs think as much of their tails as a Chinaman does of his, great must have been the affront offered to many of them.

As we landed I have said that the last link with Palma fell away, little thinking how soon another link in the chain that bound me to its shores would be forged. Then I had shown you Mallorca in its winter dress: a winter that was warm, smiling, altogether lovely. Now I have to declare the island in the gorgeousness of summer, the blaze of sunshine; an atmosphere not yet tropical, but quite sure to become so.

H. C. is not with me. I have missed him very much. On his part, when he heard that I was coming out a second time, he wrote me word that he had withdrawn into the innermost recesses of the severest monastic institution, and was preparing himself for speedy dissolution. I was to look upon him as dead to the world, literally, not figuratively; and even his place of burial should be unknown and unrecorded. I appreciate this fidelity. It has already been said that hero worship sweetens life, and relieves it of much of its prosiness. It is a charm whose influence increases; and once accustomed to this influence, it is difficult to live without it.

Only a few months ago I wrote to you my last letter, and yet, my sister, what a change has come to our lives! It is as the lapse of

ages. It has been as the rending asunder of rocks ; as the shattering of a universe ; as the sun dying out to us, and the stars falling from the heavens. Our house is left unto us desolate.

I came out here partly with the restlessness of a spirit endeavouring to flee from itself, seeking release from torture and torment, forgetfulness of its daily, nightly desolation. I did wrong. I should have gone to the other ends of the earth ; anywhere rather than here. Every familiar object has been as a sharp knife plunged into an open wound, recalling the days that lie behind this great chasm of months, this awful break in our lives, this convulsion of our hearth ; days when, as far as is possible to me, life still held something of happiness. I trod in my old footsteps. By a strange fatality I occupied over and over again the very same rooms in the hotels, where months ago H. C. and I had laughed and sung and, like the poor Princess Amelia, "had thought the world was made for us."

They rang no more with laughter or with song. They were haunted with ghosts far more terrible than those which come to us from the world of spirits. From each place I longed for the hour of departure, and fled as we flee from our deadliest scourge. Oblivion ? That is not for me !

Did I not tell you in my last letter from Palma of that strange and awful *Something* which has come to me occasionally in life, only too surely a prophet of evil, a harbinger of woe ? Is it merely a chilling shadow of coming events that passes over me ? Or is it a tangible outcome from that world where our destinies are moulded, our deeds recorded, and with which our spirits are linked, however much we may turn them earthwards ? Or is it some terrible power of dating forward into the future when a thunderbolt is about to fall ? I know not, and it matters not. Enough that it is there ; that it needs no explanation ; that time is too certainly its own terrible interpreter.

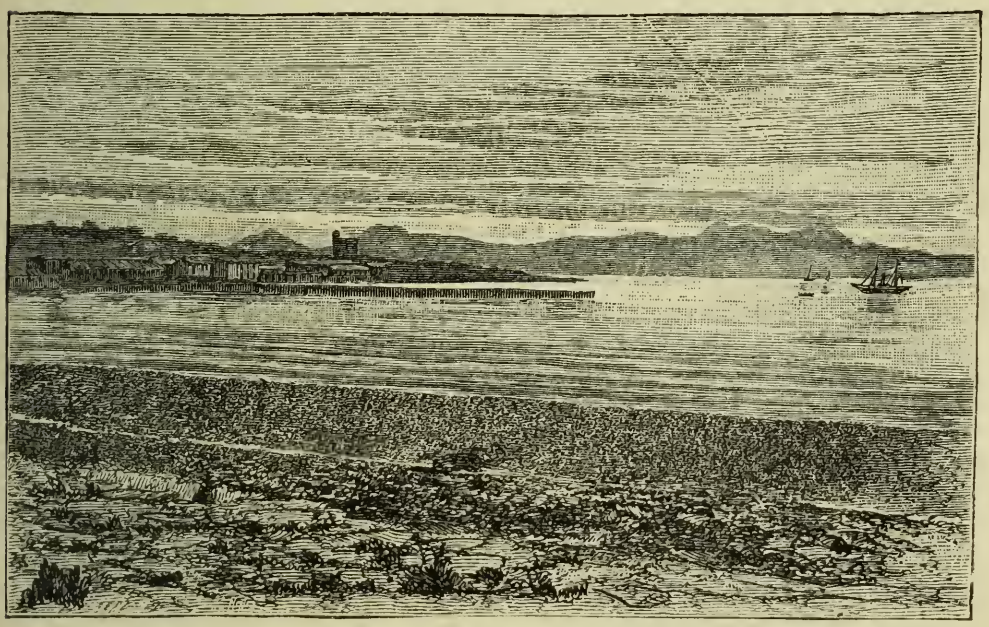
Do you remember how you persuaded me against this second visit to Mallorca ? How you saw it in the right light, whilst my eyes were blinded ? How you said it would never bring me rest and oblivion, but the opposite ? How I, who had once been happy here, could see it from no other point of view, but thought I must be, if not happy—how ever be that again ?—at least less desolate ? I would not be persuaded. I went on in my rash, headstrong way, as I have so often done in life—and so often paid the penalty.

And then there was A.'s attraction to draw me hither.

For, though my journey was to be taken alone, I was coming out here to stay with A. A., whom we had parted from in Soller ; who had come to see us off by the diligence, had warned H. C. against the wiles of that deceitful Delilah ; and had no doubt gone back to flirt with Rosita, and be worshipped in secret and afar off by Mariquita. Ay, I know it was so ; I saw it in Mariquita's shy, gazelle eyes ; though I now declare it to you for the first time.

A. drew me towards Palma with an unseen mesmeric force. I had taken a great liking to him, from our previous intercourse; still more so from our subsequent correspondence. It seemed mutual. Let me quote once more that we can only understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare within us: and so I, the hero worshipped, am in turn, the most enthusiastic, determined, and devoted of hero worshippers.

Again, you thought that danger lurked round and about Mallorca, in the air, on the earth, and in its hidden recesses. Do you remember, how, not many weeks ago, when we were in Boulogne, in our old, pleasant rooms at the Hôtel des Bains, you took up our English



BAY OF ALCUDIA.

newspaper which Henri had just laid upon the breakfast table, opened it and gave a scream: a refined and lady-like scream, I admit, but still a scream?

"EARTHQUAKE IN MAJORCA!" you exclaimed. "That settles the question. You *cannot* go now; and you should not go for all the A.'s in the world! I feel quite indebted to the earthquake."

But in the course of time there came a telegram from A. "Earthquake nothing. Rather an agreeable sensation than otherwise. Expecting you by every boat. Waiting on the quay. Don't keep me waiting too long."

And so, in spite of earthquakes, past or future, I still declared for Palma.

In due time we said good-bye to Boulogne: so pleasant in early spring when we have the piers and the sea, and the sands and the fine air all to ourselves: and we returned to England.

Then an idea came to me that I would make for Bordeaux by sea instead of by land, and on a certain Friday, the day of sailing, it blew great guns and all the elements seemed at war.

You accompanied me to the wharf hard by the old Tower of London: where P. M. was also waiting to see me off and wish me Bon voyage. The shipping in the river swayed to and fro, rocked and creaked in the gale; the water was nothing but little waves and creases; we could not hear ourselves speak. You commanded me not to go, and P. M. asked you if he should rush off for a strait-waistcoat, or a quantity of rope. He had once tied up Maskelyne and Cook, and knew the trick well.

I agreed to consult the Captain; and P. and I went off in a boat. The good ship was not alongside, and was lying some little way down the river.

"Rough weather, sir, till to-morrow at noon," said the jolly old skipper of the *Lapwing*. "After that, it will clear up and we shall have a glorious time of it, until we make Bordeaux harbour on Monday morning. A bad sea on in the Bay of Biscay, you ask, sir? Not at all. The Bay of Biscay is much maligned. I tell you that nine times out of ten we have fine weather in the Bay of Biscay, and you'll find it on Sunday as calm as a mill-pond and as blue as the heavens. Danger, sir?" in answer to P.'s anxious enquiry, which I think was made solely as champion of your cause: "who talks of danger, or dreams of it? I don't know the word. 'Fear not, but trust in Providence,' the old song says, and it has been my motto on all occasions."

"I'm afraid you have the best of it," said P., turning to me. "After such a report, I can't conscientiously administer a strait-waistcoat or a rope's-end." (He meant a rope, of course, but I let it pass.)

So I finally decided to go.

Just after doing so a blast came from the four quarters of the heavens which might have shaken the foundations of the good old Tower itself. You shivered and turned pale. The tender came alongside to convey us to the steamer. We said good-bye: that infinitely sad and solemn word. "One last long lingering look we gave." P. almost threw consequences to the gale, and came off with me without bag or baggage; without a With your leave or By your leave to his people at home: almost dared fate and fortune by throwing in his lot with me as far as Bordeaux. You restrained him with gentle influence. And then you both disappeared, and I was left to sorrow and solitude.

It was a great blank. The tender was not yet ready to start, and I went after you for a last word and a last good-bye. I was too late. A grown-up ragamuffin, all tattered and torn, came up to me and touched his cap. "Carriage just gone round the corner with lady and gentleman, sir. Shall I run after it and stop them and bring them back?"

I could hardly restrain his good intentions. He thought it was an elopement; one saw that by his expression. I told him it didn't matter and gave him a sixpence, and he evidently looked upon it as hush money.

The Captain was right to the letter. Until twelve o'clock on Saturday we had such a passage as I do not care to remember. But, just as he had foretold, so at midday it cleared, and thenceforward we steamed under blue skies and upon calm waters.

One's flagging energies revived. I lent a spare great-coat to a fellow passenger who had imprudently packed up all his, which he duly returned to me at Bordeaux. At Barcelona, I suddenly found something hard in a pocket of the said coat. This proved to be a pipe; evidently a favourite and much-used pipe; carefully coloured and splendidly polished. Such a treasure to its owner was no doubt worth a Jew's ransom. He would have suicidal tendencies on finding what he had done. So I packed it carefully in a box, with the following memorandum: "A 'light of other days' restored to its owner:" registered, posted, and sent it off to Biarritz. I wonder whether it ever reached its destination?

In Barcelona I found I should have to wait until Thursday for the Palma boat. But I had the alternative of a Wednesday's boat to Alcudia, another part of the island; and rashly decided for it. I thought it would be a change. It was a change; very much so, indeed. You shall hear.

It was delightful to walk up and down the Rambla in Barcelona. When last here it had been winter, the promenade was comparatively deserted, and the trees were bare. Now it was summer; the heat was intense; the sun blazed and the streets glowed. The magnificent plane trees were in full leaf, and almost met overhead. It was delicious to watch the dancing shadows under our feet, to revel in the cool green tones of the umbrageous (we must use fine words now and then, if only by way of contrast)—the umbrageous foliage above us.

The Rambla was lined with flower stalls; the most wonderful roses and carnations that ever were seen, and in almost overpowering profusion. "Remember, Love, the Feast of Roses," might have applied to Barcelona and to-day. The air was heavy and faint with perfume. One almost walked in a dream; a dream of Eastern splendour. It was all so unlike anything to be found northwards. North and South, indeed, are as separate as earth and sky.

And all the while, up and down the Rambla, moved an animated crowd, who looked as if they had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves in a dolce-far-niente, dreamy existence all the days of their life.

I have praised the Spanish men and women; I am not sure that they are not the handsomest race in the world: I have before now fallen in love with the grace and beauty of the fair Andalusians:

but I cannot conscientiously declare that I was greatly struck with the grace and beauty of the women of Barcelona. Rather these virtues seemed conspicuous by their absence. Yet no doubt Barcelona has its share of grace and beauty, without which the world would be unendurable, and life a greater pilgrimage than it is. They did not adorn the Rambla, as far as I discovered, but still we had our Feast of Roses and our perfume-laden air.

You may be sure that I wandered into the Cathedral, where H. C. and I six months ago had been plunged into dreams and visions, religious ecstasies, all the soft and soothing influences of this weird obscurity, this matchless tone. How much I missed my companion! And, such is the force of influence, that every now and then I turned to make a remark, and was met only by the vacant air.

Well, our world is peopled with empty spaces, with the shadows of bygone days, the ghosts of what has been, but can never, never be again.

I was almost more impressed than ever by this wonderful building. To-day, as I entered, a strange sight met my gaze. In the open space between the west doorway and the chancel sat an imposing Council. Behind a table, on which stood golden vessels and lighted candlesticks, on a throne sat the Bishop, gorgeous in scarlet robes and all the pomp and magnificence of ecclesiastical luxury. Jewels flashed from his hands, and his mitre encircled a broad white brow. His features were not distinguished by severity, but by a certain good-humoured ease, which told of a life without great emotions, of lines that had fallen in pleasant places, and would fain make them pleasant for others. Not a spiritual face by any means; but one that a burdened conscience might wish to confess to, quite certain that the rod of correction would never fall very heavily on the penitent shoulders.

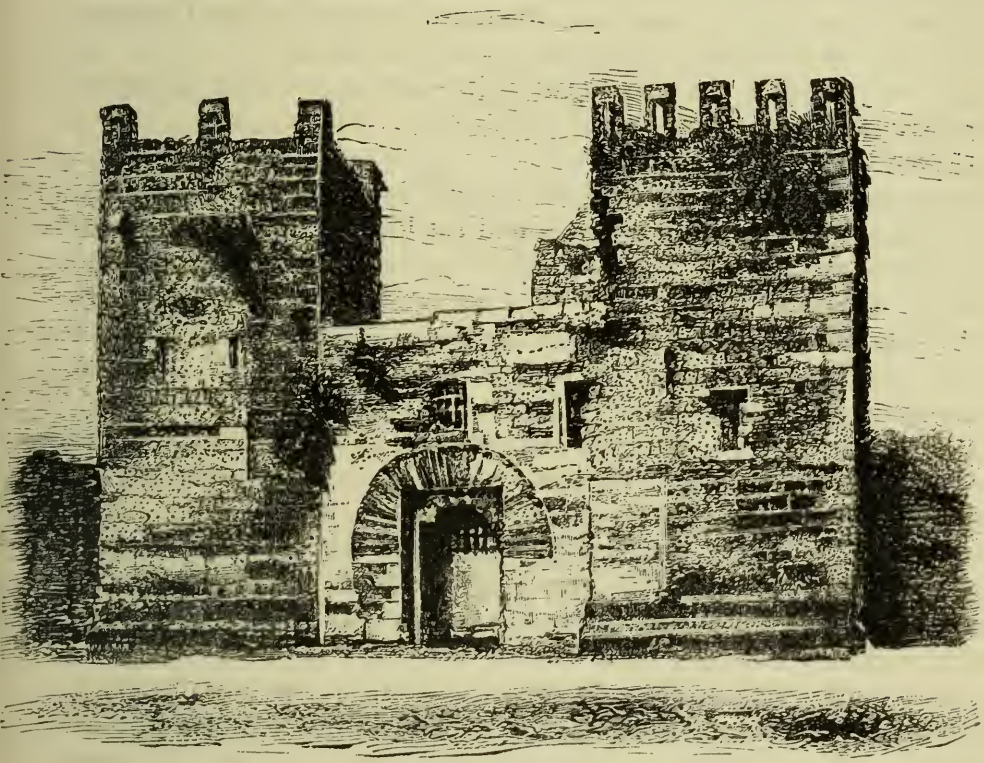
On his left stood a huge hour-glass, and the sand was falling, falling, falling; slowly but surely: reading a lesson that probably few in that crowd took to heart. To right and left of the Bishop, in front of him and on each side, forming a complete square, sat a conclave of canons and other church dignitaries, also in scarlet robes. Candles lighted up their faces with strange distinctness, throwing out into deeper, more intense gloom the surrounding aisles and arches.

From a temporary pulpit to the right of the Bishop, but at the further end of the square, a little man in black was holding forth. He was a barrister. His voice was loud, his gestures were animated, his purpose was evidently more secular than sacred. Sometimes in his animation he almost disappeared within the pulpit, to shoot up again like a Jack-in-the-box. Sometimes in his anxiety to impress his hearers he almost threw himself into the very midst of the Council.

But they were evidently used to this kind of thing. They were all perfectly calm and motionless. Not a muscle of their faces

moved, not an eye seemed to twinkle. In more than one case, indeed, the eyes were closed in what might have been taken for the sublimity of thought or the ecstasy of devotion, but was only the rhapsody of dreams. I cannot say much for many of the faces: they bore traces neither of intellect nor spirituality. One could only wonder how they had attained to the ecclesiastical dignity of a scarlet robe.

The reason for all this commotion was a simple one. A vacant canonry had to be filled up, and two divines put forth their claims to promotion. Each had his special pleader, and it was the business



GATE OF ALCUDIA.

of the pleader to prove his own cause the better, his own right the greater. No wonder that the Council took things so placidly. Of course they had made up their unprejudiced minds upon which of the two candidates the lot should fall.

The sands of the hour-glass drew to an end, and I watched more closely. The Bishop evidently watched also. As the last grains fell through; in the very midst of a sentence in which the pleader seemed to be hurling anathemas at those whom he failed to convince; the Bishop rose from his throne, the sentence was never finished, the Council broke up. The special pleader, in no wise disconcerted, came down from his elevation, mental and physical; literally tumbled himself out of the pulpit; and rapidly disappeared into the sombre depths of the cathedral.

The Council formed itself into a procession, in which the Bishop, with robes upheld, was the centre of attraction. As it seemed, not a bit cared he for robes and mitres, pomps and ceremonies, flashing jewels and the bowing down of the world. He put up with all this as a part of his office. His was a lordly and commanding form; portly with advancing years, and the good things of life. It is not always Friday.

The procession marched up the beautiful aisles and went forth into those rich and rare cloisters that I have already described to you. Then they entered a Sacristy or Chapter-house, and gathered round their Bishop. Words and sentences were exchanged, he smiled and laughed, looked very jolly and tolerant, at peace with all men, contented with his lot. Then they all, one after the other, kissed his jewelled fingers and he departed to his palace, escorted by two of the favoured dignitaries.

I went back into the cathedral. Lights were out, golden vessels had been removed, the hour glass was put away for another occasion; the benches on which the Council had sat looked empty and desolate. I tell you, my sister, that our world is peopled with empty spaces. All, all, passes away.

I was not sorry to leave Barcelona. Apart from its wonderful cathedral I do not very much care for the place. It is hot and enervating. Its climate is supposed to suit invalids. I had telegraphed to A. that I was coming by way of Alcudia, so that he might transfer his waiting from pier to platform. I should reach Palma by train, not by boat.

We started at four in the afternoon. The gorgeous sunset—the harbour of Barcelona is famous for its sunsets—flushed the water and gilded the distant hills, which faded away in a dreamy purple haze, inexpressibly beautiful.

The night passed. About three o'clock in the morning I was awakened by the steward muttering cabalistic words in an unknown tongue. He managed to make me understand that we had reached Alcudia. I replied that it was too early to turn out; I would do so about seven. Came the answer: Then they would have the honour of taking me on to Minorca.

This was startling, and you may be sure that I was very soon on deck. Minorca and Port Mahon had no present charms for me.

A splendid morning, but chilly, for the sun had not yet risen. It was that weird moment between the dawn and the daylight when we seem as it were to be hovering between two worlds. Few people ever see it, and, in spite of all that has been sung and said, I think they are best in bed and asleep. It is the most depressing time of the twenty-four hours.

We were in the Bay of Alcudia, but some distance from the shore. Low, undulating hills surrounded us. On one of them was an old watch-tower, dating back to the days of the Moors or the

Romans. Before us, quite far off, a small stone landing stage or breakwater formed a harbour and jutted out a hundred yards into the sea. A handful of houses on land looked desolate and deserted. From an open doorway or window gleamed a solitary light, as if to pilot one in the right direction. Overshadowing all was the grey melancholy tone of early morning.

I confess to feeling a little lost, simply because I could not understand these people. Here I was at the ends of the earth; in the most uncivilised portion of Mallorca. I was about to land alone: should be at the mercy of a people who might be angels in disguise; who might also be ruffians thirsting for my life. You know the silly old German saying: "Kann sein, kann auch nicht sein, kann *doch* sein!" But there was no help for it. A small boat was alongside in charge of an old fossil, and into this I must descend.

I looked around for my luggage. Not a sign or trace of anything was to be seen. At Barcelona it had been put into the hold, and I concluded that it was still there. I made signs. The captain, and the officers, and the stewards, and the men made signs in return. It was like a scene in a play. We were as good as semaphores, but much more ridiculous and energetic.

I pointed to the hold; they pointed to the boat; I looked down and saw nothing but the old fossil. I insisted upon going into the hold—what else could I do? Down we all went, a long procession, with lanterns, a great tramping of feet, a confusion of tongues. No sign of luggage. It must be under those bales and boxes at the further end. I gave up in despair, entered the small boat and departed. The whole ship's company looked over the sides with what my distorted imagination took to be a satanic grin of triumph, or scorn, or derision. It was nothing of the kind. It was an affectionate farewell.

Away we went. The old fossil rowed lustily. He was also singularly intelligent; we really conversed without speech. The steamer receded; Alcudia gained upon us. On reaching the landing pier, my sight was gladdened by an astonished view of my precious lares. How they arrived there remains a mystery to this day. I can only suppose that in Alcudia they possess an enchanted carpet.

Down came some officers to inspect the luggage. I assured them it contained nothing to eat—the chief thing on which one seems to pay duty in Mallorca. They were perfectly satisfied, presented arms (I don't know why they carried them, still less why they presented them), and we separated with delight. At least I bear witness to my own sensations.

We went up the pier and into the open house from which had gleamed the solitary light. It was a modest roadside sort of *cabaret* —we have hardly its equivalent in English. I entered a dirty room with a cold stone floor. Opening out of it was another and a darker and a dirtier room, into which I took care not to penetrate.

People were astir. There were loaves of coarse bread on a rough deal table, evidently meant to supply the little neighbourhood. On a bench against the whitewashed wall a man in uniform with a gun by his side—policeman, soldier, custom-house officer, I know not what—was taking his ease and drinking anisette. Whether this was his last draught for the night, or his first of the morning, I cannot say. He, too, was civil enough to present arms as I entered; I returned the attention with military salute, and we became excellent friends.

Enter a couple of ruffianly-looking men, and I was immediately dinned with what seemed to me one horrible incomprehensible word. This word was not ABRACADABRA: it was much worse. It sounded like KARRAWAKKY, pronounced with strong KS and RS, and deep seated vowels. The air seemed full of KARRAWAKKY: it flew about the room like sparks from an anvil: the two men hurled it at each other and shouted it at me. I thought they would have come to blows and bloodshed, and if the officer had not been propped so flat up against the wall, I should have got behind him for protection.

What could the men want? What was the meaning of the word KARRAWAKKY? Was it Alcudian for murder and sudden death? Had I been captured by brigands, was a price set upon my head, and would the English Government pay it? I trembled.

At this critical juncture enter the old fossil, and the scene changed.

He was evidently lord of the establishment. He too made use of the word karrawakky, but with him it had quite a new sound: came down, as it were, from small capitals to ordinary type. The two ruffians were turned out, and went on with their quarrel in the open air. He then made me understand that karrawakky was Mallorcan for conveyance, without which I could never reach the train that was to convey me to Palma. The two ruffians had rival karrawakkies, and therefore hated each other with an earnestness worthy of a better cause. I had a drive before me of about ten miles to the little town of La Puebla. The train started about eight o'clock.

Presently up came the conveyance of the country, a one-horse cart covered with a dome-shaped white awning. It was very much like a moving sarcophagus, inasmuch as that, once inside, you were immolated from the world: "lost to sight," to quote H. C., whom, just now, in my solitude, I missed more than ever: shielded from the gaze of the curious—the very curious of Alcudia.

After a cup of coffee, much needed, as you may suppose, after all these thrilling adventures at three in the morning, the work of immolation began. I climbed into the cart on one side, the driver climbed into the cart on the other side. There was just room for two, and thus we journeyed. He was a tall, thin, grave, quiet-looking man of about twenty-four, dressed in light clothes, which gave him the appearance of a miller, and he never opened his mouth during the whole journey.

We entered into the town of Alcudia, which lies at a little distance from the bay. It is the oldest portion of Mallorca, and retains many traces of its antiquity. Little as I yet know of it, I can see that it is one of the most interesting old places in existence.

A large ancient gateway admitted us within the precincts. Alcudia has a true Oriental aspect, and is surrounded by a double set of

THE OLD MOORISH FOUNTAIN.

walls: Roman and Mediæval. A curious amber tone, beautiful and picturesque, overshadows the whole place. The town lies in a plain. On one side it yields to long stretches of shore, and the soft-flowing waters of the Mediterranean; everywhere else the prospect is bounded by long chains of low, undulating hills. I praise the town of Alcudia; its old-world influence; but from all I hear it is impossible to praise its people.

In the narrowest of streets we drew up at the inn for the purpose of changing horses. The animal was taken out of the shafts, which

were lowered without ceremony, and I was left uncomfortably suspended between earth and heaven at an angle of 45 degrees. Bailie Nicol Jarvie, hanging from the rock by his plaid, could scarcely have felt in greater jeopardy.

I clutched at the roof, the sides, the seat, anything that came first. The people of Alcudia, looking upon me as public property and lawful game, unable to gratify their curiosity in any other way, came and thrust their faces into the cart. I would have given anything for a wild bear to terrify them into a respectful distance, or a Flibbertigibbet to plunge them into a swoon; but at three in the morning (it was nearer five now) one's nervous force is at a low ebb, and we take things quietly.

After long waiting the new horse came round, the cart was tilted up with an abruptness which sent me backwards, the small crowd scattered, and we once more set out. I could keep up no manner of conversation with the driver. Words we had not, and he was not given to signs. I wondered whether he was mute.

In due time the quaint and quiet little town of La Puebla declared itself, with its old church tower rising above the flat-roofed houses. We passed the melancholy cemetery—all the cemeteries are melancholy in Mallorca—with its imposing little entrance and its catacomb-walls, and soon after drew up at the station.

The train left at five minutes to eight, and I entered upon the last stage of my journey.

Soon I found myself once more on old familiar lines: the junction for Manacor, whither, you will remember, we went when we visited the Caves of Arta. I thought of the rattling old omnibus that had nearly cost us our lives; of the quaint old Manacor inn, and the Manacor mosquitoes that had played such havoc with H. C.: and of the procession, headed by the landlady and brought up by the cook, that had escorted us to the door of the hotel on our return to Palma. How well I remembered all the old landmarks!

Palma at last; Palma once more; dear old Palma de Mallorca. And on the platform A. waiting for me: the pleasantest sight I had seen since parting from you on the banks of the Thames.

We were soon on the wing. Outside the station, our old driver Paolo—not in command of the lordly barouche, but with an ordinary Karrawakky—recognised me with solemn delight, and cracked his whip in honour of the occasion. A few moments after we had reached A's. abode, and I felt myself at home.

Not that I am now in Palma at all under the old conditions of my winter visit. Then I had to put up with the fonda: the best that Palma could produce certainly, but still a fonda. Now I am in a palace, and I feel that if royal blood does not run in my veins, it is merely the result of accident.

For A., who has been in Mallorca ever since we crossed over

together last November, has taken this old palace in the very heart of Palma, where he intends to remain until he departs hence.

And as we entered Palma together so we shall probably leave it together by and by. In fact he has already proposed that we should go out and climb the Himalayas—for which he considers my excursion to the Puig Major has qualified me in an especial manner. Have I your permission to roam with him India's coral strands? I warn you that he will immediately after propose an expedition to Greenland's icy mountains. We shall probably return at the end of five years, bronzed and bearded bipeds, with nerves and livers.

He has courage and energy: has not only taken this old palace, but furnished it; and with the best *cordon bleu* that Palma will produce, and with James for a valet—who to me has been worth his weight in gold ever since he helped me down the Puig Major, when I was basely deserted by A. and rendered desperate by H. C.—he is surrounded by all the good things of life, and is in a state of serene happiness. As I shall now come in for a share of all this serenity in addition to A.'s companionship, you will feel that I also am to be envied.

This palace is an old building, very typical of Palma. It is in a narrow street, which, in the early morning especially, rings with the cries of street hawkers: water-carriers, fruit-sellers, &c. The earliest and most unearthly sound is that of the dustman—if I am not mistaken in the gentleman's occupation. He invariably wakes one out of the last and best sleep, and is not blessed in consequence.

Extremes meet; and so, opposite our windows, there flourishes a blacksmith's forge. It might be worse. There is always something picturesque and interesting in a forge. The sound of the anvil is almost musical; and I have never seen anything singular, or incongruous, or out of place, or far-fetched, in the idea of Handel's Harmonious Blacksmith. On the contrary, the great composer felt a certain truth—and see how the theme inspired him.

The sparks flying upwards, too, read their lesson, and remind us that man is born to trouble. A blacksmith might well be a philosopher also.

Our blacksmith here is an interesting example of his profession. He is stalwart. His face is always black and his teeth are white. If we happen to be looking out of window, and he happens to be looking up, he touches his cap and gives us a nod and a grin, and a friendly feeling is established. This is not meant for familiarity. In his eyes, we are only a little below monarchy.

I told you that extremes meet, and next door to the blacksmith comes another palace. The blinds are kept very much down, but the windows are ever open, and there often issue forth sounds that are really musical; a brilliantly-touched piano, and a voice of sweet and sympathetic quality. The songs are all love songs. Need I tell

you who inspires them? Who but the faithless A. whom we last left taking Mallorcan lessons from Rosita in Soller, and who is now quite ready to receive the homage of love songs in Palma. Alas, for human nature.

The first day a lovely pair of love-lit eyes came to the window, and the blind was drawn aside by a snow white hand; a hand made for romance. Its owner was the possessor of the sympathetic voice. But as soon as the eyes caught sight of two heads instead of one, they retreated like a frightened fawn, and melancholy fell upon A.

STILL WATERS.

Then, by means of an invisible gold thread running between the windows, like a lovers' electric telegraph, he sent over a billet doux sprinkled with otto of roses, in which he informed the sweet singer that I was in his confidence and she had nothing to fear. In fact, he added, I understood very little about love and romance, and all that sort of thing, but passed my life dreaming over the dry bones of metaphysics and translating rhymes from the Hebrew.

"She is very beautiful," he murmured to me, when the missive had been appropriated by the delicate hand of the unseen fairy. "I think I shall marry her. She is noble as well as beautiful, you know. Will you be my best man?"

I took time to consider, as the judges sometimes say in a difficult case.

Shall I describe our palace to you?

A. has furnished it with a severe simplicity that is very charming. You are not for ever knocking down occasional tables and breaking your legs in the dark by falling over impossible chairs. The floors and walls are of stone. The rooms are immense, and echo to the sound of our voices. The walls are decorated with lovely

Spanish fans, old pieces of damask of rare workmanship, beautiful Majolica plates, charming water-colour sketches of captivating Spanish women.

His own special room is adorned with classical pillars, surmounted by the heads and busts of two black ladies. Upon these his eyes first rest on awaking in the morning, and they fill him with sublime visions of the ancient days of Rome and Greece. He becomes quite classical and historical, and at breakfast we go through all the merits of the Cæsars, all the deeds of the Triumvirate, whilst Catalina every now and then comes in like a Greek Chorus, with her everlasting solicitude for our welfare. Catalina is our *cordon bleu*.

REBECCA AT THE WELL.

These black ladies, A. tells me, are Cleopatra the First and Cleopatra the Second. I don't know; I never heard of Cleopatra the Second. But A. declares that she had an actual existence. Perhaps she had. I believe everything I am told.

Our dining-room is oval, and the walls are lined with cabinets of ancient and curious glass; gems that A. has picked up in this old Palma de Mallorca. He is a great authority in these matters, and I am not; so I sit at the feet of my Gamaliel, and receive instruction. He has not yet followed the Spanish custom of placing his whole house at my disposal. I hope he won't. I should never follow the Spanish custom of returning all these old specimens. Could I be expected to do so?

This oval dining-room is our smallest but most curious and uncommon apartment. Here we breakfast every morning upon delicious ensaimadas. They are neither cake, pastry, nor bread, but a sort of elegant and refined combination of all three. When we first

had them at the Fonda de Mallorca, we despised them; now I consider them worth their weight in gold. Lest you should think this an exaggeration, I must add that they are light enough to be blown away by a zephyr. A. swears by them and dreams of them. Fortunately he is not all Roman history and mythology, but, like myself, has little human weaknesses which make him interesting and companionable.

A. takes his chocolate out of small cups without handles, and I take my tea or coffee out of the same—I mean a similar cup, of course. It is clear that we could not both take coffee and chocolate out of the same cup at the same time. We have no cups with handles here. It is charmingly primitive, and takes us back to the days of Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, hoops and patches and powder, when people drank tea out of saucers and prided themselves on a particular curl of their little finger.

Here we have no saucers; they are not the fashion, and we follow the fashion. We have plates instead. The first morning, charmed with the idea, and wishing to carry out to the letter the times and customs of Dr. Johnson and Mesdames Thrale, Piozzi et Compagnie, I poured my tea into the plate. Unfortunately it was shallow, and in raising it to my lips, whilst endeavouring to give the right curl to my little finger it all upset on the further side, like a miniature Niagara. A curious word escaped A.—a twinge in a favourite corn, he explained—and the Greek Chorus appeared on the scene: this time with a variation.

For the future I intend to be content with modern customs, and shall leave Dr. Johnson and his attendant shades to their repose.

Catalina, our *cordon bleu* and Greek Chorus, is a tall, thin, rather refined-looking woman, with a sad-toned voice and a countenance to correspond. She has seen better days. Her father was a landed proprietor, and Catalina never expected to go out to service. But she has a husband who considers that to overwork is to wear himself out before his time; and she has a swarm of children; and if he will not earn their bread and butter, why she must. She does it bravely, and he scruples not to take of the frugal fare provided by her industry.

Have you ever watched an old hen and her brood when food is thrown down to them? How she looks on and urges her willing offsprings to great efforts in eating, and never touches anything herself until she considers that they have had enough and to spare? That old hen has far more Christian principle about her than Catalina's lord and master. Nevertheless she is inordinately proud of him, and has begged the favour of having his photograph taken.

I have brought over, this time, in addition to an ordinary camera, a small instantaneous detective machine. A. has taken this under his own charge, and it yields us great amusement. None know that they are being taken until the thing is done. Then, if they happen

to notice the camera pointed at them, they start as if it were a gun, and they themselves under fire. All yesterday morning we went about the quaint old streets of Palma, and in and out of the beautiful old courts, and took every interesting subject and every group that crossed our path. Some I enclose to you. One reminds us of Marie Antoinette, and is a good type of a Palma girl. A. calls her Rebecca at the well. She holds her classical pitcher, which she has just filled with water, and is evidently waiting for Isaac to escort her home. I had great difficulty in persuading A. that his name was not Isaac.

The success of this little machine is perfect, and works so instantaneously that our groups are full of dramatic action. We see them actually, as it were, in motion—almost hear the sound of their footfall.

To-day has been spent very differently. We have been out on the water, the blue flashing waters of the Mediterranean. We left quite early this morning on an excursion to a distant shore to pick up shells for A.'s garden.

We started in A.'s boat, and with A.'s old boatman and a boy. James took special charge of a luncheon-basket groaning with good things: festival baked meats prepared by our Greek Chorus.

I should like you to see the old boatman. He has a head and face that would do honour to a three-decker as its figurehead; a mouth that is like nothing except the entrance to the caves of Arta; a voice that would do credit to Vulcan in the midst of his forge, and would be heard above the raging of his fiery furnace, the roar of his anvil, the thunder of his bolts; a laugh—but I cannot describe to you his laugh. It is thunder and lightning all mixed up and blended into one, appalling in its effects. He sends one into convulsions: and every time he speaks or laughs I do not know whether the thrill that passes through me is most of mirth or terror.

It was a very lovely morning. The sea flashed its jewels around us. The sun poured down upon us with intense heat. A golden haze for a time enveloped us. I have told you that we live here in a rainbow atmosphere. We are steeped in Eastern glamour and Oriental magnificence. We are in Dreamland, Fairyland, the Valley of Diamonds, the regions of Aladdin. Imagination rejoices, and steeps one in an existence wherein all else is forgotten; all the outer world; everything but the present scene and hour. A. is at the helm, full of dreamy conversation. I am stretched at his feet in the bottom of the boat, dreaming also, lotus-eating, gazing at that wonderful sky above us, listening to A.'s periods, full of romance and poetic prose; wondering if this existence will last for ever; if it be true that there is an outside world whose prose, alas, knows nothing of poetry; where all is cold and hard, and full of sorrow and sighing; where our steps are haunted by the spectres of sin and error, duties neglected, and things that can never be recalled.

Tangled threads, my sister, are our lives, and well for us if a wiser Hand than ours shall unravel them at the last.

And every now and then, startling one like a thunderclap in a clear sky, comes the voice and the laughter of our Vulcan of a boatman.

We reached our destination, and landed with difficulty. The rocks were steep and slippery, and the blue waters, calm though they are, plashed and dashed at their base. On the greensward beyond, James spread our luncheon, and we were as happy as the Gods on Olympus, and quite as well provided with nectar and ambrosia. The old boatman and the boy went off, and presently

IN OUR GARDEN.

returned staggering under huge sacks of shells that I could not have lifted for a king's ransom.

A fair wind wafted us back to Palma in the afternoon, when the sun had passed the zenith and the shadows began to decline. We returned wrapped in that dreamy languor, which is not fatigue, but a blissful state of existence only possible in these latitudes, and from which one would almost like never to awaken.

But as the shades of evening fell, we awoke to realities and Catalina's chefs-d'œuvre. After which we went as usual and reclined in the most luxurious of chairs, in A.'s garden.

It is a very picturesque garden, gorgeous with beautiful blooms and overshadowing trees. We are surrounded by houses and neighbours. In one room there are fifty millinery girls all hard at work. If A. calls to Catalina, at once the fifty heads are thrust out at the window, and fifty voices all scream out to know which

Catalina is in demand. But A., who is extremely particular and circumspect, pays no attention. He always sits with his back turned to this window.

Everyone here seems to be christened Catalina. It is the name of a patron saint, and no doubt is supposed to charm away misfortunes and evil spirits—like the gargoyles of antiquity. I fear the charm is only too often ineffectual.

The air is full of Catalinas. You cannot go out into the streets but you hear Catalina shrieked on every side: and Catalina! Catalina! Catalina! is the burden of every song.

Into this garden of A.'s, James brings us coffee. The shades of night have fallen, and we take it in faith—we cannot see it. The cups are, of course, handleless, and we are reminded of a bygone era, and drift insensibly into old-world talk of people and places, manners and customs, which have passed away almost beyond the power of realisation.

We sit and talk and dream, and the moments glide insensibly into hours. A damp and chilly feeling creeps into the air: a strange mist or miasma seems to rise out of the earth. Night after night we go in, cold and wet—in this hot climate—with a curious sensation in one's limbs, as if circulation had suspended itself.

I am convinced there is danger in this night air. I believe that even death may lurk in its subtle influence. I tell A. so, but he only laughs at me, and I, weakly sensitive to ridicule, pass it over. Nevertheless, to-night I feel that something is about to happen. I shiver as we rise from our easy chairs, and ache in every limb.

It all passes off as I sit writing to you at my little table, burning the midnight oil. A. has long since retired to repose, and is no doubt dreaming of ensaimadas, which he is sharing with Cleopatra the First and Cleopatra the Second. Every now and then the old Palma watchman passes up and down the narrow street, flooding it with pale uncertain light. I have grown used to Il Sereno, and greet him as an old friend. As he was in winter, so is he in summer, even to his cloak, which is not discarded. At this very moment of writing, his footsteps are growing faint in the distance, and his voice is dying upon the air. Once more he seems to say: "The night cometh." But the sequel—"and also the morning"—finds no echo in my heart. To me it seems always Night.

THE CHÂTEAU DE KERONEL.

A True Story.

MY name is Jane Wilson, my age forty-five, and my life, until the strange and terrible experience of two years ago, which I am about to relate, has been as peaceful and prosaic a one as can well be imagined. I am a spinster, but that fate having been predicted for me from my earliest youth, I was resigned to it in anticipation and have not found it unbearable in reality.

For my sister Mary, on the contrary, with her rare beauty and sweet disposition, a great career was prophesied, and when she closed a brilliant girlhood by making an even "finer match" than we anticipated, no one was more proud and pleased than I.

I lived on quietly with my father (we had lost our mother soon after my birth) until his death, which occurred when I was about thirty years of age.

My sister was then anxious that I should reside with her for the future, and her husband, Sir George Manvers, seconded her invitation. But I clung to my independence, and stayed on in the old house alone. Every Christmas I spent with the Manvers at Daintree; and occasionally my nieces, Madge and Nellie, and their brother Harry, would spend a month with me, and then the old rooms would re-echo with the sound of their merry young voices, which to me, who never seemed to have had any youth of my own, was the sweetest of music.

The two girls were very different—Madge, the elder, a bright, handsome brunette with laughing eyes and frolicsome ways; Nellie, a lovely blonde, serious, dreamy and romantic. She and Harry were twins, and her devotion to him amounted to worship, although it was Madge who entered into all his amusements, and was his aider and abettor in all his schemes of boyish mischief.

He was the type of what a boy should be; manly, generous, high spirited; the pride and darling, not only of his mother, but of his less demonstrative father, who built high hopes upon him: hopes alas! never destined to be realised.

He was travelling on the continent with his tutor when suddenly, without any warning, the blow fell. "In Vienna's fatal walls, God's finger touched him, and he slept." A telegram had come announcing his illness; then, within half-an-hour, before his parents could start to go to him, another saying that all was over.

I pass over the misery of the next few months. The sorrow of all was deep and lasting, but on none did it tell so heavily as on poor little Nellie, who fell into a state of settled melancholy from which it was impossible to rouse her.

I had been summoned to Daintree at the first and remained on from month to month at Sir George's earnest request, to be of what comfort and help I could to Mary, whose health, never very strong, was sadly impaired by grief and anxiety.

Altogether, it was a trying winter, and when in spring they moved up to town for the session, I was not sorry to return for a while to the rest and quiet of my own home, in which, however, I was not to be left for long. Early in August, I had a letter from Madge, telling me that, having been advised to try what complete change of scene would do for Nellie, they had decided on spending the autumn in Brittany, and were all anxious that I should accompany them.—"Do come, dear Auntie," she wrote. "Mamma is no stronger than when you last saw her, and it will be such a comfort to have you."

I was not likely to refuse such an invitation. I loved my sister dearly, and was glad to feel that she turned to me in her trouble. The idea of a tour in Brittany, also, had great attractions for me, and under brighter circumstances would have been altogether delightful. My preparations were soon made, and I joined the Manvers in Eaton Square on the day before that fixed for our start.

Here I found that the plans had undergone some modification.

Sir George's parliamentary duties would detain him in London for another three weeks, but as it was not thought advisable to delay our departure, we were to make straight for M.——, in lower Brittany, there take a furnished house, and await his coming. Meantime, on *me* were to devolve the duties of leader of the expedition.

More than once during that evening when I looked at Mary and marked the sad change for the worse a few short months had made in her appearance, my heart sank, and I would fain have drawn back from the charge I had undertaken. But I stifled my misgivings; and next day we started from Southampton, en route for St. Malo.

We had a quick and smooth passage; daybreak saw us at the entrance to the bay, and Madge and I went on deck to enjoy the prospect, leaving the others still sleeping below.

Before us rose the grey old walls and spires of St. Malo; to our left those of St. Servan; while further away lay the more modern watering-place of Dinard, its gay villas dotted along the shore and crowning every little eminence. Across the sands moved strange, bare-legged figures of men and women with creels slung over their shoulders, and in their hands long spades or nets with which they dug for sand-ells or fished for shrimps in the shallow pools left by the receding tide. The eastern sky was tinged with a rosy radiance.

At this moment Nellie crept up from the cabin. The change from its gloom to the brilliancy above must have been great indeed, and, roused for an instant from her usual apathy, she pointed to the east and quoted softly: "The golden gates of heaven are opening wide."

"Yes," exclaimed Madge, throwing her arms round her sister. "And oh, Nellie darling, what radiancy of glory—what bliss beyond compare must lie within!"

Anything in the way of sentiment seemed generally so remote from Madge that I looked at her in startled surprise, and was struck almost painfully by the strange, eager longing of the gaze with which she was contemplating the sky. It was as if in imagination she was already within those "golden gates." But the glow faded from the horizon; with it the rapt expression left her eyes, and, saying hastily that she must "see after mamma," she left the deck.

By this time we had anchored, and all was bustle and confusion.

We travelled luxuriously, with a whole suit of servants, among whom was a French maid. So we were spared the worry of the douane, and, leaving them to squabble with the Custom House officials, drove off at once to the hotel.

Passing under a great stone archway, our carriage rattled through several narrow, stone-paved streets, and drew up at a small doorway, where we alighted, and were admitted into an inner court, round three sides of which the inn was built. We were pleased with everything: from the old-fashioned welcome of the kindly hostess, and her smiling, quaint-capped bonnes, to the steaming and delicious café-au-lait and long crisp rolls with which we were presently refreshed.

I saw nothing of the town, however, to my great regret, for soon after our arrival Mary terrified me by a fainting fit. And though she soon recovered and assured me that there was no cause for alarm, as these things had become matters of common occurrence with her, I could not make up my mind to go out and leave her.

Next morning, we made an early start, and before evening were installed in the "Hotel de l'Europe" at M. A noisy, bustling, crowded inn it proved to be, more showy but far less comfortable than the homely inn we had just left. Mary took a dislike to it on the spot, and declared that we must lose no time in finding a house. So directly after breakfast in the morning Madge and I went off in quest of one; with instructions that, if possible, it was to be outside the town, which at this season of the year was over-run by British tourists of the usual obnoxious type.

We visited two or three house-agents, but heard of nothing likely to suit our purpose. Were almost in despair when Madge's eye was caught by an advertisement of a "Château à Louer, three miles from M., well-furnished, commanding magnificent views, with fine gardens, orchards, &c.," which she at once pronounced to be "the very thing," as there was a romantic sound about it which would be certain to please Nellie.

The advertisement referred us for all particulars to Mons. Morny, banker, on whom we happened to have a letter of credit, and we

sallied forth once more to deliver the letter and hear what he had to tell us.

A most agreeable and polite person was Monsieur Morny. He assured us that we were fortunate in having the chance of securing such a residence as the Château des Tourelles, which was a house "comme il y en avait peu." It belonged to the Comte de Keronel who generally lived in it himself, but, being obliged to spend some time in Paris, wished to let it during his absence. Should we decide on taking it we could enter immediately, and the rent was wonderfully moderate: though as to that, indeed, Sir George had given carte-blanche.

So far, so good, and we took leave of our smiling, bowing friend, promising to see the château on the following day and let him know the result.

Next morning we hired a carriage and all started together on a visit of inspection.

We were soon clear of the town, and after driving for about half-an-hour a sudden bend of the road brought us in sight of an imposing, turretted edifice, which our driver pointed out to us as "Les Tourelles." It lay to our left, and was built on the very edge of the table-land, which thence sloped gradually to the river, and from a wide arched doorway in the base of the château a road ran down this slope and was lost to view some fifty feet below us. It led, we were told, to the lower town (M. is divided into a Haute and a Basse-ville) and was formerly the principal approach to Les Tourelles, but the road on which we were would bring us to the upper entrance of the castle, which was the only one now used.

As the driver finished this explanation, we turned into an avenue, fully half a mile long, of magnificent Spanish chestnuts. At the end of this a handsome gateway gave admittance to a large gravelled court, and we drew up before a double flight of steps, at the top of which stood a little wizened, witch-like old woman, with a shrivelled apple complexion, bright, dark piercing eyes, and clad in a striped stuff gown with high white cap and muslin kerchief folded across her bosom.

This was the "gardienne" of the place, who, having been warned by Monsieur Morny of our coming, now invited us to enter, assuring us that we should find everything ready for inspection within.

This floor was devoted to reception rooms opening from the central hall. A handsome dining-room, oak panelled and oak furnished library and smoking-room, boudoir in the florid style, all cupids and rose buds, finally a really charming drawing-room with painted ceiling and many mirrors, but otherwise furnished in modern fashion with absolutely comfortable-looking chairs and sofas, the first we had seen since leaving home.

This room had five long windows opening on to a wide balcony

with steps leading to the garden below, which was laid out in terraces, and, with its trim pastures, clipped yews, fountains and statues, was, as Madge remarked, "Quite like a thing in a book."

With a sigh of intense satisfaction Nellie opened a window, stepped out, and was soon pacing up and down the stately terraces like the heroine of romance she no doubt felt herself to be.

Leaving her to this enjoyment we proceeded to visit the bedrooms, which were large, airy, cheerful, and more than sufficiently numerous. The views from all the windows, both above and below, were lovely. More and more charmed with this delightful château, we descended again to the dining-room, where Mary said she would rest, and I was left to inspect the basement, while Madge joined her sister in the garden.

Mariette Hervé, the old gardienne, led the way through a door in one corner of the entrance hall, and I followed down a winding stone staircase into a long vaulted apartment, dimly lighted by high narrow windows, into each of which a stone cross was built. At some remote period it had probably been used as a chapel, but on this point my guide could give me no information.

"It might be so—she could not tell—in the old days folks were more 'devote' than now—but in the time of her father it had been the entrance hall of the castle. And that," pointing to the heavy oaken brass-clamped door: the same, of course, that we had seen from the carriage, "was the entrance door and stood always open.'

"And why," I asked, "should it not stand open now?"

"Times were changed," was the reply. "Now that all the best hotels and shops were in the Haute-ville, the Basse-ville had fallen into disrepute, and there was no coming and going between it and the castle. But every de Keronel had to travel the road to the old town once, for all that," she added with a malicious chuckle.

"How so?" I asked.

"The day of their burial, my good lady," laughed the old crone. "That road leads to the cemetery in the old town, where all the Keronels are buried, and every one of them must be carried out of that door feet-foremost one day. The last to go was the present Count's father. That was five years ago, and the door has been closed ever since. But I daresay I shall live to see it open once more," and she chuckled again and rubbed her skinny hands together.

She was an uncanny old body, and I regarded her with strong disfavour, which perhaps noticing, she changed her tone, and remarking that I had still to see the rest of the premises, opened a side-door and motioned me forward.

It was a relief to escape from the atmosphere of that eerie hall. I followed my guide into a spacious, well-lighted kitchen, through various offices, cellars and out-buildings, and finally rejoined my sister;

who, on hearing that all was satisfactory, determined to take the château without delay.

We set out on the return drive, well pleased with our morning's work. Madge climbed on the box beside the driver, with whom she at once began an animated conversation. Mary and Nellie leaned back in their respective corners, and closed their eyes.

Seated with my back to the horses, I was looking idly before me when the château came again in view, and I started up scarce able to believe the evidence of my senses.

From the great door, wide open now, a long, dark line of figures was slowly issuing forth. A row of black-robed priests, a coffin borne aloft, with sable pall—then a long, long train of mourners.

Even as I gazed, the door closed on the last of these, and solemnly, mournfully, the procession filed down the hill, and wound its way along the road beneath us, while I followed its course with straining eyes, and such a fear and dread took possession of my heart that with difficulty I restrained myself from crying aloud "Look there! it is an omen! have nothing to do with the house from which it comes."

In another moment our road curved again, and the whole scene vanished from my sight.

Breathless, trembling, utterly unnerved, I sank back in my seat. Madge was still chattering to her companion on the box, Mary and Nellie still slumbering peacefully—they, evidently, had noticed nothing. Had I, too, been sleeping, and was what I had seen but "the baseless fabric of a dream?"

Fain would I have thought so. But no! I had been in full possession of my waking senses; of that I was all too certain. How, then, account for what I had beheld? Only a bare ten minutes before, we had left the château untenanted, save by the ancient gardienne; we had seen no other creature within its precincts, every corner of which we had explored. How had it been possible in so short an interval, to assemble the numbers who had swelled that funeral train? The priests—the corpse—where had they been concealed?

Suddenly I remembered that we had not entered Mariette's house in the courtyard, and at the same moment the recollections of her words flashed across me, "that no doubt she should live to see the long-closed door open again!"

Here, then, was the solution of the mystery, about which I had been making myself so miserable. Some friend or relative of Mariette's had died, and was to be buried that morning. Warned of our coming, however, and not wishing to create a sad impression, which might interfere with our taking the château, she had contrived to postpone the setting out of the funeral procession, until we should have taken our departure, meantime all preparations for it were carefully hidden away in her own little house.

Eagerly I seized on this explanation, and desperately I clung to it, determinedly ignoring its many weak points, and taking myself to task as a superstitious old fool, for having allowed anything so simple to perplex me for an instant. Monsieur Morny would no doubt explain the matter to me.

Volunteering to convey to him my sister's decision to become the tenant of Les Tourelles, to Monsieur Morny accordingly I betook myself, after luncheon, and proceeded to pour forth my tale.

The banker listened, at first with amazement, then with growing incredulity, and when I had finished he gravely assured me that what I had been relating was a simple impossibility. Where could such a concourse of people as I had described have been concealed? Certainly not in Mariette's little house in which there was barely room to swing a cat.

And was it reasonable to suppose that an old woman of that class should have had such an idea as to conceal them with a view to sparing our feelings? Or that the priests would have lent themselves to such a deception?

He spoke in a persuasive, soothing tone. Evidently it was doubtful whether he considered me most fool or madwoman. Too much agitated to resent this, as I might have done at another time, I asked him how he, then, accounted for what I had seen.

"I think, Madame," was the reply with a smile, "it is probable, that overpowered by the heat, you slept like your companions and had a dream."

"But I tell you," I cried indignantly, "I was not dreaming! I was wide awake, and as plainly as I now see you I saw a funeral come out from the very door that Mariette had just before told me had not been opened since the late Count's funeral!"

"There!" he rejoined triumphantly, "is not that confirmation of my theory? You fell asleep, your mind running on Mariette's words. What more natural than that they should colour your dreams? Besides," he added, "the question is easily settled; one of my clerks lives close to Les Tourelles; we will ask him whether there has been any death in the neighbourhood." And ringing the bell he summoned the clerk.

"No; there had been no death; never indeed had the Commune been more healthy."

There was nothing left but for me to confess that Monsieur Morny was in the right and to beg him to keep my communication a secret, as Lady Manvers and my nieces were nervous and impressionable.

He looked as if he thought they had not a monopoly of these failings, but promised discretion, and ushered me politely to the door, saying he would call in the course of the evening with a copy of the lease, and that there would be nothing to prevent Lady Manvers from moving into Les Tourelles the very next day, should she wish to do so.

On my return to the hotel, I found Mary and the girls eager to take possession of their new abode, and delighted to hear that they could do so without delay. The terms of the lease brought by M. Morny were agreed to without demur; a cook and a couple of stalwart bonnes for house-work were engaged on the recommendation of the landlady, who also undertook to furnish us with carriage, horses and coachman. By the time we retired for the night our preparations were nearly completed. The die was cast. It was too late now for retreat, and long did I lie awake in the silent watches of the night, striving to pierce the unknown future, and wondering doubtfully whether I had done well to be silent.

Next evening saw us once more en route for Les Tourelles, whither the servants and luggage had preceded us some hours before, that all might be in readiness for our coming.

A weight of gloom which I vainly endeavoured to shake off had hung over my spirits all day, and as our carriage approached the curve in the road I strove to close my eyes. But an impulse which I was powerless to resist seemed to chain them open, and to turn them in the direction of the château. Ah ! Merciful powers ! Again the great door opened wide ! Again the long dark train of mourners issued slowly forth ! The sight was too much for my already overwrought nerves, and for the first time in my life I swooned away.

When I came to myself we were already turning into the court, and Mary and my nieces were bending anxiously over me. They insisted on my being carried into the house, where I was laid on the most comfortable sofa in the drawing-room, and all busied themselves in bringing remedies, bathing my forehead with eau-de-cologne, placing cushions for my head, etc. " We have worked you to death, poor dear," said Madge ; " and now you must just lie still and be coddled, and leave us to look after ourselves."

Evidently no one had the slightest idea of the real cause of my swoon. To me alone had the vision been sent ! Ah ! how fervently I hoped that over me alone hung the fate it seemed to predict.

When I awoke next morning the sun was shining gaily in at the window and the maid was standing at my bedside with a cup of tea.

Recollection soon came back to me, but refreshed and strengthened by the night's rest I had more courage to face it. What evil that ghostly vision might portend I knew not, but if it threatened any of my dear ones, might not the fact that the warning had been sent to me prove that in my hands lay the power to avert the evil ? There was comfort in this thought. Earnestly I resolved that if the most ceaseless care and watching on my part could avail aught, they should not be wanting. With these resolutions I descended to the breakfast-room.

The next few days were spent in settling down comfortably into our new domain and in exploring the neighbourhood.

The improvement in Nellie was most marked, and the look of

happiness which this brought to poor Mary's face made her appear better also. Once or twice, indeed, she again alarmed me by sudden attacks of faintness, but on each occasion these attacks were accounted for by a little over-fatigue, and I allowed myself to be persuaded that there was nothing really wrong. In another week, too, Sir George was to join us, and my responsibilities would be at an end.

It must not be supposed that I had forgotten the warning I had received.

During our first days at Les Tourelles it had been constantly in my mind. I had even visited old Mariette, and had sounded her cautiously as to any legends of the de Keronels which might throw light upon it. But she knew of none, or, if she did, would not communicate them ; and as time went on and nothing happened, the recollection of what I had seen grew less vivid.

One night I woke suddenly from a sound sleep, with an unaccountable sensation of fear and dread. My room communicated with my sister's by a door which was always left open, and it seemed to me that as I woke *something* glided from my bedside and passed through this door.

Still, with that awful, paralyzing horror upon me, I lay almost gasping for breath, when of a sudden from Mary's room rang out an agonising scream. In an instant I was beside her. She stood in the middle of the floor, the moonbeams falling full upon her, her eyes staring, an expression of wild terror on her face. As I entered, again that nameless something seemed to flit past me, and, pointing in the direction it took : "There ! There !" shrieked Mary, and fell down at my feet.

By this time all the household had collected. The girls had come running in at the first alarm. We raised her and did what we could to restore consciousness, but it was of no use ; life had fled with that last cry. The doctor, who was summoned in haste, told us that she had heart complaint, and that death had been hanging over her for months. What she had seen at the last to accelerate it we shall never know in this world.

All our cares were now required for Nellie, who, on realising that her mother was really gone from us, fell into strong convulsions, and before Sir George's arrival was in a raging brain-fever. For weeks she hung between life and death ; then youth conquered, and slowly she began to struggle back to health.

As her convalescence advanced, I was glad, however, to see that she showed no symptoms of relapsing into the morbid melancholy which had followed on her first bereavement. She sorrowed, indeed, but with a more chastened sorrow : no longer as one "who knew no hope."

It was Madge who first drew my attention to this change in Nellie. During all this sad time it would be impossible to describe what Madge had been to us ; to her father, the sweetest, tenderest, most

sympathetic of daughters; to me, the most loving and helpful of companions, while to her sister she was so unwearied and skilful a nurse that the sick girl could scarcely endure her to be away from her side for a moment.

Dear, bright, loving, unselfish Madge! How bravely she bore her own heavy burden of sorrow, while bending all her energies to lighten ours! And none of us saw how the prolonged strain was breaking her down; none of us took so much as a thought for her who never seemed to have one to spare for herself. Day by day she faded before our eyes, and we were too blind to see it until, alas! it was too late.

It was not until Nellie was so far recovered that Sir George had fixed our return to England for the end of the following week that I found leisure to notice Madge's altered looks, and even then I thought she only needed rest and change from the long confinement to house and garden. A little fresher air would soon restore her appetite and bring back the colour to her cheeks, and I insisted on her joining her father and Nellie in the daily drives they now began to take.

One afternoon it chanced that I was her only companion. We had been into M. for some commissions, and were returning. As we approached the well-known curve in the road, I was passing it with averted head, as ever since that second vision, when Madge touched me on the arm.

"Look, Aunt Jennie," she said quietly.

Even before I turned I knew what sight would meet my eyes—knew also from her tone, quiet as it was, that to her also had the vision been sent.

Hand clasped in hand, in perfect silence, together we watched the long, dark line file out from the castle door and wind its noiseless way along the road beneath. Then, as the last figures disappeared from our view, Madge turned to me, no terror, but a wonderful radiance in her eyes.

"That is for the last time," she said. "Soon, very soon, the Golden Gates will open for me now."

"Madge! Madge!" I cried, "what do you mean?"

"I have seen it twice before," she answered, in just the same quiet tone, "and I shall not see it again. The time is very near when I shall join our dear ones who have gone before."

"Why should you take it to yourself?" I cried. "I, too, have seen it twice; the warning is for me, not you."

She shook her head.

"No, no, dear auntie; not for you, but for your little Madge is the warning sent. And do not grieve that it is so. Do not let your thoughts dwell on that gloomy procession. Before those dark doors close on my dead body, my spirit will have passed through the Gates of Light above, and will be already rejoicing in the Glory within."

"Oh, Madge, my darling," I sobbed in anguish; "I *cannot* let you go!"

But she soothed and hushed me as one would a child, telling me that I must not wish to keep her; that she was "so tired," so ready to go; until, insensibly, the influence of her own sweet composure stole over me, and I found myself talking with her as calmly as if this were no new topic between us.

"Your father—Nellie?" I asked her after a time. "Have you thought of them? How will they bear to lose you?"

"They will comfort each other," she said. "It is for this that I have been so very glad of the great change in Nellie. I had hoped to have seen dear old Daintree, and all the old places and people once again," she went on; "but it is not to be. I know now that I shall never leave Les Tourelles alive."

"So soon, so soon! It is impossible! Why, Madge," I cried, desperately, "you are not even *ill!*"

"Am I not?" she said, with her gentle smile, turning her sweet face full upon me.

Ah! why had I not sooner noticed its wasted outlines? How blind, how cruelly, selfishly blind I had been! And now, conviction striking sharp and sure to my heart, I burst afresh into an agony of grief and remorse.

But Madge led me to my room, and there again caressed, soothed, she almost awed me into tranquillity, and forced me at last to join the others with at least the semblance of composure. All that evening she was the life, as usual, of our little circle; winning even her widowed father to cheerfulness by her pretty, playful ways, and bright, though subdued, gaiety.

But it was the last time she ever came among us. On going to her room that night she was seized with a fit of coughing, in which she broke a blood-vessel. All that human skill could do for her was done, but it was of no avail. The fiat had gone forth.

To the last she kept her gentle gaiety and her tender thoughtfulness for others, but there was no clinging to life, no regret at being so early called away. Her room looked westward, and every evening she was laid on a couch in the window to watch the setting sun.

On the last evening she was laid there as usual. We knew that the end was close at hand, and were all gathered round her. The sun was setting behind a mass of purple and rose-coloured clouds, touching them as it sank with a brighter and still brighter radiance. At last the whole western sky glowed like a sheet of molten gold.

Its glory seemed to be reflected in the face of the dying girl; she raised herself on her pillow, and stretching her hands towards it: "The Golden Gates! the Golden Gates!" she cried; and without a struggle, without a sigh, her gentle spirit took its flight to Eternity.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

"POPULAR, but not known," was said of Alexandre Dumas, in the days when a new play or a new novel from his prolific pen was greeted, not only in France, but all over Europe, with rapturous enthusiasm.

The popularity of the author of "Monte Cristo," and the "Three Musketeers" was indisputable.

No amount of adverse criticism could stand against his vivid narrations of splendid deeds, superhuman sacrifices, audacious crimes —scenes of love, gaiety and adventure, strung together with an inexhaustible fertility of invention, and that spontaneous gaiety of heart which is so rare and so refreshing.

But, still, few writers have suffered more public and private slander and misrepresentation, or been so much underrated—so little known.

In England, although his stirring romances were read with avidity, he met with an ignorant moral condemnation, his works being classed with those of Eugéne Sue, besides being rather illogically stigmatised "as for the most part worthless, and for the most part not his own."

It was also said of him that he lived only for amusement—to amuse others and to amuse himself—which was, perhaps, the truest thing, and the secret of his being able to pass the time for you as few other novelists will.

Thackeray, at least, appreciated him. "I think," he says, "of the prodigal banquet to which this Lucullus of a man has invited me! Where does he find the money for these prodigious feasts?"

And again, in the "Peal of Bells," he writes still more enthusiastically: "Of your heroic heroes, I think our friend Athos, Count de la Fère, is my favourite. I have read of him from sunrise to sunset with the utmost contentment of mind. He has passed through how many volumes? Forty? Fifty? I wish, for my part, there were a hundred more, and would never tire of him rescuing prisoners, finishing ruffians, and running scoundrels through the midriff with his most graceful rapier! Ah, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis! you are a most magnificent trio!"

His detractors in France accused him of being a literary manufacturer, and of employing that sort of collaboration which is not considered creditable; but this was nothing more than the established fashion of the day, and, whatever assistants he may have called in to paint the backgrounds, the hand of the master was never to be mistaken.

"Why will you not collaborer with me instead of Magnet?" he was heard to ask of Dumas fils. "I assure you it is not difficult,

and would bring you in forty or fifty thousand francs a year. You would only have to raise objections—to oppose me in the subjects I submitted to you, or to furnish me with rudiments of ideas which I could develop at leisure."

The usual style of collaboration was this. The plot was arranged in common. The collaborateur brought a sketch of the work to the master, who altered it at his pleasure, and wrote it all over again; from one badly written volume, making, perhaps, two or three.

"Le Chevalier d'Harmanthal" was originally a novelette in sixty pages; but from an anecdote Dumas would make a novel; from a novel a romance; from a romance a drama; and, far from owing much to his assistants, it is unknown the number of writers whose name is given to books of which he himself wrote more than a third.

He had no literary jealousy, and it was a pleasure to him to find out what were the faults of a manuscript, and to correct and complete it. Thus he would often attribute more ability to a young author than he really possessed.

"I can't think what is wanting to make so-and-so a man of talent," he would say.

"Possibly it is the talent he wants," it was suggested.

"Tiens! that's true! I never thought of it."

Especially in the series entitled "Memoires d'un Médecin," he is accused of working up a good deal of borrowed material and of using a tolerably stout canvas of history into which to weave individual character and a few unreal incidents. If this be plagiarism, then every historical novel-writer must be called a plagiarist.

In the "Chevalier de Maison Rouge," and others of the series, we have all the horrors of the French revolution before us; but what record—what memoires pour servir could give us the living picture of Marie Antoinette in all her strength and weakness, her pride and passion—of the indolent but kingly Louis—and their chivalrous adherents? Could Brantôme or Tallemant des Réaux have ever enchained our sympathies through fourteen volumes for the silent sufferings of the Comtesse de Charny, martyr to love and loyalty? —to the strange interventions of the mysterious Balsamo—the devotion of the Chevalier de Maison Rouge?

Great historical events are said to be bad subjects unless the interest be connected with wholly fictitious personages, and if this be the case, Dumas has surmounted the difficulty, and has drawn all his characters, whether real or imaginary, with equal force. We believe in them as we do in the events themselves. In his rare scenes of tragic passion he is excelled by very few; the reticent dignity of the classic school still clung to him, perhaps unconsciously, and however agonising may be the scene, it is narrated simply, uninterrupted by tedious analysis of feeling or tainted by the violence of melodrama. He was a lover of his own writings, and was often heard roaring with laughter as he wrote.

A short time before his death he was found reading "Les Trois Mousquetaires," and was asked what he thought of it. "Very good, very good indeed," he replied. A few days later "Monte Cristo" was in his hands, and the same question was put to him.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, "not to be compared to 'Les Mousquetaires.'"

It was as a play-writer that Dumas first made his mark. He was the avant-coureur of the Romantic School, and even in "Christine," his first drama, which was intended to be perfectly classic, the author's tendencies were sufficiently manifest.

At the close of the first reading of the play at the Théâtre Français, there was a dead silence, and the members of the committee looked at each other. Dumas was informed that the necessary deliberations could not be carried on in the presence of the author; he therefore withdrew. Presently Firmin, the successor of Talma, came to him and said: "The fact is, the committee finds itself in a position of the greatest embarrassment."

"And why?" asked Dumas.

"Because we cannot tell if the piece is classic or romantic."

"But that is only a question of words! Is it good or bad?"

"Ah," said Firmin, "that is what we don't know either."

"Christine," however, was to be produced, but owing to objections —disagreements—quarrels, and especially the depreciation of Mademoiselle Mars, it fell through, and was finally played at the Odéon.

His next drama, "Henri Trois et sa Cour:" compiled, it was said, from two historical fragments, and the scene in Walter Scott's "Abbot," where Murray makes Marie Stuart sign her abdication, was written in two months and played at the Théâtre Français.

"But before we came to that," says Dumas himself, "what rages —what despairs! what gnashing of teeth! Oh, Théâtre Français! Circle forgotten by Dante in his 'Inferno!'"

Dumas fils tells a good story of his father's clearsightedness as to the signs of public favour and his readiness to adapt himself to public taste.

Whilst a theatrical version of "Les Mousquetaires" was being rehearsed at the Ambigu, the helmet of one of the firemen was seen stationary over the screen which shut off a part of the stage during the first acts. At the beginning of the last it disappeared.

As soon as he could get away Dumas rushed after the fireman and asked him why he had not remained to the end.

"Because it did not amuse me," was the reply.

Dumas went back, tore off his coat, waistcoat and cravat, as was his wont when going to work, called for the last act and tore it into shreds.

"*It didn't amuse the Pompier!*" he exclaimed.

Dumas wrote rapidly, but before putting pen to paper he had given infinite study to his work. He describes himself as lying

silent for days on the deck of a yacht imagining and thinking out the plot of a story. It was only after he had carefully arranged everything that he began to write, maintaining that the execution of a novel was a thing of minor importance. The conception—the progression—the rendering idea—this was the difficulty; all the rest would follow, as a matter of course—quite mechanical penwork.

This assertion having been disputed, he undertook to write the first volume of the "Chevalier de Maison Rouge" (after having well matured the plot) in sixty-two hours, including sufficient time for food and sleep. The volume was to contain seventy-five pages—forty-five lines in each page, and these were written in less than the time specified.

Another story is told of him: that being tired with half a day's shooting he went back to the farmhouse whence the party had started, and was found, on their return, stretched out before the kitchen fire.

"Have you been asleep all this time?" he was asked.

"By no means—there was such an abominable noise of cows and sheep, I couldn't close an eye."

"You have been doing nothing, then?"

"Yes. I have just finished composing a play in one act."

It has been said that he was indifferent to a regular, well-constructed plot, and that most of his novels are faulty in this respect. But let it be recollected that, fond as he was of history, the groundwork was almost always ready to his hand with sufficient incidents for the action of his characters.

In his dialogue lies the chief secret of his excellence, and he used to say that like Goethe, it was from his works that he derived "l'art de confabuler." He is no analyst, and has been called the least quotable of authors.

There was one thing he considered essential: he could never carry out a play or a romance unless he had seen the localities where the events took place.

He must himself have visited the scene of action. He went to Fontainebleau to write "Christine"—to Blois for "Henri III."—to Boulogne for "Les Trois Mousquetaires."

"Charles VII. et ses grands Vassaux" was played at the Odéon, but without success, although it is a grand reading play, and this confirmed him in his enthusiasm for Victor Hugo, whose command of versification he was always contrasting with his own mediocrity. Full as he was himself of imagination and feeling, of le feu sacré, a rhyme came to him with difficulty.

"I would give ten years of my life to be able to write such verses," he exclaimed on reading "Marion Delorme." Being present at a first reading of the play, which took place at the house of Baron Taylor, the then director of the Théâtre Français, he was asked when the first act came to an end, what he thought of it.

"There is not a fault to find," he replied, "unless it might be in the mania that Victor Hugo has of making his personages enter through the window instead of the door."

When the reading was finished, Taylor enquired his candid opinion of the play, and he answered without hesitation: "Victor has reached his highest point."

"Why do you say so?"

"Because in 'Marion Delorme' are all the qualities of mature genius, and not one of the faults of youth. Progress is impossible when one begins by a perfect thing or one as near perfection as possible."

It was on leaving the house that a fanatic of the Romantic band exclaimed, on looking at the playbill for the evening: "Les malheureux! et ils vont jouer Britannicus!"

To the great regret of Dumas the first representation of "Marion Delorme" took place without him, and the editor of the "Journal des Débats" said, intending to console him: "You did not lose much—it was not a success."

"Not lose much? Not a success?"

"Oh, yes—but it was received coldly, and no money."

"Coldly! no money? But," cried Dumas, "the poetry?"

"Feeble; much feebler than 'Hernani.'"

"Feeble? A piece in which there are such verses as these?" And then he repeated the whole scene in the first act between Marion and Didier.

"You know all that by heart?" exclaimed the editor.

"Naturally—I think it one of the finest things in the world."

"Well, that is wonderful! You to praise Victor Hugo!"

"Why not? I love and admire him."

"A confrère!" ejaculated the critic, in genuine astonishment.

Speaking of a poet who had fallen out of the ranks, Dumas said: "Why, in the career that we began together has he succeeded less well than I have? It is incomprehensible. He had quite as much genius as I have, and wrote incomparably better verses."

His contemporaries were not his equals in generosity. Victor Hugo treated him with coldness; some say with secret hostility; but Dumas would have eulogised his worst enemy rather than have kept silence when eulogy was due.

It was the same with Alfred de Musset, who refused all his offers of friendship. "He is a thicket of thorns," Dumas used to say, "and repays a caress with a scratch; since he will not have me for a friend, and since I will not hate him, I have a curious sort of feeling towards him. *I regret him.*"

Dumas made three or four million francs with his pen, but he was always in pecuniary difficulties. He neither gambled nor indulged in any excessive extravagance, but, over-prodigal and wholly careless, he was robbed on all sides.

His son relates that coming in one day and finding six hundred and fifty francs on the table, he asked his father to let him have fifty, who replied :

"Try to leave me a hundred if you can."

"A hundred francs? Why, I only asked you for fifty."

"O, I beg your pardon. I thought you said six hundred."

One of the most curious things about Dumas was his extraordinary technical knowledge. He speaks securely and familiarly of the manners of all ages and countries. He employs the right terms in all circumstances, and in arms and dress, in duelling and fashion, is equally at home; but with all this learning and observation he remained a boy to the end of his life. Rash, reckless, wholly unsuspicious, enthusiastic, genial, no truer word was said of him than was said to his face by Marie Duplessis when the father and son were being mentioned together. "Oui, Alexandre est Dumas fils, mais vous n'êtes pas Dumas père; vous ne le serez jamais."

C. E. Meetkerke.

"TIMES GO BY TURNS."—Southwell.

I sit far from home, 'neath a roof had for hire,
Rain thick on my windows, the ghost of a fire;
The stormy sea moaning the wrecks it will cast
On the rocks, ere the fate of its passions be past;
Sad tidings—the last of the last that I love—
And a stranger's voice sings in the chamber above!

Lord, is this Thy world that I blessed long ago
In the old country home where the cedar sweeps low,
Where the rain seems to fall but to nourish the field,
And the light glowed in gay through our family shield?
And there were so many to love that one dared
Sometimes to wonder who best might be spared?

There came in procession, sin, sorrow and care,
And the cedar is felled, and the house stands bare.
Oh, my sisters! happier was she who died
Than our beauty, who married for wealth and pride—
And so I sit in this lonely gloom,
And the stranger sings in the upper room!

There was something one said 'neath that old cedar tree
Which made it the crown of God's world for me.
And oh, I am certain he meant it then—
But women are fonder and weaker than men ;
For his love faded—and so did I !—
Why need that girl keep singing ? Why ?

Less bitter the loneliness and the rain,
The divining fire and the moaning sea,
Than the song of a happiness nought to me—
Joy looked on outside shows so like Pain !

I remember once on a Christmas night,
When far on the snow glowed our festive light,
In the midst of our frolic and fun, there came
A face to our window : 'twas wild with shame
And sorrow and want, and in black despair
The wanderer cursed what she could not share !

Then it cut to the core of my heart to see
Life has other parts beside mirth and glee.
Her look struck my joy with so sharp a pain
That I could not join in our dance again ;
But I stole to the door, and I gave her food ;
And she dropped her cursing and called me good.
(I might pass her now, with indifferent mind,
Thinking, "Life has troubles of various kind.")

The very next year on the Christmas night
Over our snow glowed no festive light :
The dead was with us, but that woman passed
With her sailor husband safe home at last !
And I thought that her joy had shone more fair
Had her woe blessed gladness it could not share.

'Tis a young, sweet voice in the upper room,
Its sweetness wasted on me and gloom :
(I once sang sweetly—one told me so—
More than twenty long years ago !)
There are shadows behind and shadows before.
Twenty years hence, will this song be o'er ?

Ah, surely by then I shall be away,
From the lonely room and the dying day,
From the roaring sea and the divining fire,
At rest in a Home not had for hire.
So we take our turns. And God knows His plan—
Let the lassie sing as long as she can !

ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO.

KITTY MACRANE.

I AM companion to Mrs. Malleson, and have been so ever since Dick died, and that was twenty years ago when I was young and happy, and life was bright and the world seemed beautiful.

I don't fancy Mrs. Malleson needed a companion much; she was not more than thirty years old then, and had not lost her husband. But you see she had been fond of Dick, and when I was left desolate she pretended that a companion was necessary to her happiness, and so I have been with her ever since.

She did not let me guess that it was for my sake; that would have been quite unlike her; and it is only since I have become a real necessity to her that she has confessed why she brought me home then. She has been so good to me—oh, so good! and my life is quite happy now, which I thought it could never be again when I lost Dick.

Mr. Malleson died many years ago, and Arthur now manages the estate, and his mother, and all of us. Arthur was always masterful, even when I remember him first, a little boy in frocks. But he is tender, too, and considerate, and we rather enjoy being managed by him. Arthur is a clever man and is doing great things as member for the county; but he has his prejudices and some of them are very deeply-rooted. He has a suspicious dislike of lawyers and a hatred of Ireland. This, as I often tell him, is a sign of great narrowness somewhere, but there are no other signs of it; to individuals he is most tolerant, and he doesn't often meet lawyers or Irishmen.

We live at Kenmore chiefly because Mrs. Malleson is fond of the country; but sometimes the house in town is opened and we go up for part of the session. Arthur is independent of the house in Berkeley Square; he always has his chambers where he occasionally stays during the season. We are not more than fifty miles from London, so even while Parliament is sitting, we see a great deal of him.

It was at Kenmore that the events I am about to relate took place; the events which have so altered Arthur's life. I was in the morning-room, I remember, arranging the flowers for the drawing-room, when Mrs. Malleson came in with an open letter in her hand. She sank down wearily into a chair, and said: "Come here, Mary, and advise me; I am at my wit's end."

"What is it?" I asked, kneeling down beside her and taking her hand.

"Oh, it's Arthur!" she said indignantly. "He is most unreasonable, most unkind! Is it my fault that the child's guardian is dead?"

"What child? what guardian?" I asked, bewildered.

"Why, my husband's Irish cousin, Kathleen Macrane; that child whose father died some years ago—don't you remember?"

"And her guardian is now dead?" I said slowly.

"Yes; he died suddenly last week. We are the only relatives she has in the world. Cousins seven or eight times removed, I believe; but still, however distant the relationship may be, we must have her here. It is only right and proper."

"Yes," I said, thoughtfully. "And Arthur does not see it in that light?"

"Oh, Arthur is quite absurd about it!" Mrs. Malleson said impatiently. "He says, 'Send her to school; Newnham; *anywhere;* but pray don't have her here'!"

"How old is she?"

"About eighteen or nineteen, I think. Certainly too old for school; and I cannot send her off to Newnham without consulting herself."

"Why no, certainly. I suppose she will be quite dependent on you, too?"

"No; she has about two hundred pounds a year, I think; I wish that were the difficulty. Those Irish members in the House have made Arthur quite rampant; he cannot believe that any right-minded person can have lived, much less been born, in Ireland. But he *must* submit to have ——"

Arthur interrupted the words. He came into the room with the look on his face which we all knew to mean "My mind is made up."

"Mother," he began, "I was wrong just now in what I said; perhaps selfish. I was considering myself and my own feelings alone, not the other side. Of course it is a responsibility we cannot well avoid; she must come here; we are her natural protectors, I suppose, now: and however disagreeable it may be to have a wild Irish girl rushing all over the place, it is our obvious duty to submit."

Mrs. Malleson heaved a sigh of relief. But she saw what it had cost Arthur to concede this.

"And now, how is she to come here?" he went on; "we had better get it over at once; delay won't improve matters."

"Don't you think you might fetch her, Arthur?" suggested his mother hesitatingly.

"Impossible!" flashed Arthur. "I must be attending to my duties in London."

"Let me go," I spoke quickly. "I am an excellent traveller, and a better chaperon for a young lady than Arthur is."

"If you would not mind, Mary," said Mrs. Malleson. "I would go myself—but, with this cold hanging about me ——"

"You must not think of it," I interrupted. "I shall like it of all things; and I will try to make the poor girl feel a little at home before she comes here. It is quite a charming plan, and I shall not mind the sea passage there or back."

"It is very good of you, Mrs. Lister," said Arthur affectionately. "But there shall be no sea passage for you: we can arrange for her to be brought to Liverpool under proper escort."

A few days later I was at a Liverpool hotel; our trusty old butler, John, in attendance on me. The young traveller, then on the sea, was expected to land that afternoon. I must confess that I felt slightly nervous as I waited in the little private sitting-room. Suppose she should turn out to be something too wild! Yet, poor child, she might be in sorrow; no doubt she had just had a painful parting with her home and country—let me give her the best welcome in my power. I poked the fire and put on coals, and pulled the ugly old arm-chair close to the hearth, and then I rang the bell for John, and sent him to buy some flowers; any that he could find on this chilly March day. John went to the docks in the afternoon, and I waited. It was about five o'clock when he returned in the cab.

"The young lady has come, ma'am," he said, appearing in the sitting-room. And I saw in the doorway a girl with a look of shyness and yet of courage in her eyes.

"My dear, Mrs. Malleson was suffering from cold and could not come to meet you herself," I said, holding out my hands; "but I hope you will not miss her."

"I shall be very ungrateful if I do," she replied; and then I kissed her, she looked so sweet and lovable.

"Now come to your room and take off your things," I said; "you must be tired out. We will have tea when we come back; I thought high tea would be nicer than dinner after your voyage."

"Ever so much nicer," she returned. "I am not accustomed to late dinners, you know; at school we dined at two o'clock."

"But since you left school, my dear, at your guardian's?"

"I have never lived at my guardian's. Did you not know? I have always been at school, holidays and all. Mr. Ferris didn't like girls; I only saw him once a year."

"Your life has been a little lonely," I said gently, in answer to her look and tone.

"Oh, it has," she cried. "The girls were nice, but they seemed to leave so soon—the ones I cared for. That was the sadness of it; so many partings."

The voice and eyes were so wistful that I felt quite husky, and could only look at her in silence. "This is Arthur's wild Irish girl," I thought with inward amusement. "She doesn't seem capable of a harmless jig, poor child; much less of tearing about to turn the place upside down, or of ranting forth on the woes of her injured fatherland."

Not at all did I understand her at this time, or indeed for weeks afterwards. Hers was a complex nature, and many-sided. I only saw the wistful longing for affection, the gentleness, the sweetness of her character, and drew my conclusions accordingly. I was entirely

perplexed later when I saw her cold, wilful, tantalising and altogether incomprehensible. And the cause of all that happened was mine; all the misery and pain, all the bitterness, all the miserable misunderstanding which ensued was my fault.

"You will soon only long for change," I said cheerfully; "at Kenmore we lead a very peaceful, calm life. Mr. Malleson goes often to London, it is true, but we always have his return to look forward to. The only fear is that a young girl like you will find it dull."

"I don't think that is likely," she said smiling. "School is not exactly an exciting place, yet I found it very interesting."

We went back to the little sitting-room then and had tea. The bare hotel room looked more home-like with the young girl in it, and after the tea-things had been removed and I was sitting in the old armchair, with Kitty curled up on the hearthrug at my feet, we felt quite happy. I could not help watching the child, she made such a pretty picture in the firelight. Hers was a small, flower-like face, set in a frame of dusky brown hair, the features were delicately cut and small, the mouth and chin more firmly chiselled than is usual with girls of her age. Her eyes were beautiful—large, clear, grey eyes, and capable, as I afterwards found, of very varying expressions. At present they were full of a wide-awake interest in what I was telling her of her future home.

"It is a charming old place, my dear," I said, in answer to her eager questions. "Yes, there are woods at no great distance, and a river beyond the village. You will miss your hills, I am afraid; we are sadly flat, but we get finer sunsets for that very reason."

"And the people, Mrs. Lister; what are they like?"

"You will love Mrs. Malleson; everyone does. The people about are very pleasant, but we are a little independent of them; no one lives very near, so we have to be satisfied with ourselves, and we find it fairly easy."

"And Mr. Malleson, my very, *very* far-removed cousin? You don't say anything about him," she said, looking up at me with her great questioning eyes.

"Oh, yes, to be sure," I answered, trying to speak with great ease, and failing signally. "Arthur is very nice; exceedingly nice; but he is in Parliament, you know, and often away in London."

"Yes, and you spoke of always looking forward to his return," she said, a little puzzled. "I don't understand, is he not *quite* nice?"

"Oh, yes, *indeed!*" I returned all too eagerly. "He is a dear fellow, and we should be terribly lost without him. He rules us all, you must know, with a rod of iron, but he is so good and wise, and we need it, don't you see?"

"I am afraid I *don't* see," she said quietly. Then with frankness; "I don't think he *is* quite nice; what you say makes me think him overbearing and interfering."

"My dear," I cried in alarm and distress; "you have quite a wrong idea of him, indeed, *indeed* you have! All I meant was that Arthur is strong and determined; not a bit more so than is becoming in a man."

"Yes?" she said questioningly. "And how is he strong?"

"Oh, in every way," I answered quickly. "He has strong likes and dislikes; strong inclinations to certain people and strong prejudices against others."

"I see," she interrupted, looking thoughtfully into the fire. "He is narrow and bigoted, but with strong affections for the few of whom he approves. *I* shall hate *him*, and *he* will take a lasting prejudice against *me*. How pleasant!"

"My dear," laying my hand on her shoulder, "you quite misunderstand me. Arthur is not at all narrow-minded; he is not arrogant, or conceited, or self-assuming, as you seem to think: he is one of the gentlest, noblest of men. Why, he behaved splendidly about you, in spite of his prejudice."

"About me?" said Kitty, looking up with wide-open, astonished eyes.

"Yes," I went on, too anxious to clear Arthur, to think of the effect of my words. "He has an antipathy to Irish people, and when Mrs. Malleson proposed that you should come to Kenmore, he opposed the plan, saying he would not have a wild Irish girl running loose all over the place. But after a few minutes' reflection, he recalled all he had said, repented of it, and came back to confess it. 'Mother, I have been wrong,' said he; 'we are her only protectors, and it would not be right to evade the responsibility duty has laid on us; she must come here, of course.' Don't you think it was noble of him to acknowledge that; he a man, and so proud too?"

"Oh, most noble!" she answered in a curious tone. "His sense of duty must be strong."

"It is," I said readily. "And you will soon overcome his prejudices, my dear; nothing could be more unlike his idea of an Irish girl than you."

"Shall I?" she said in the same tone, with an ambiguous smile. "Time will show."

"And I hope you have a clearer idea of Arthur's character now, after all this explanation?"

"Oh, I have a very clear idea of him, indeed, thank you, Mrs. Lister. I feel as if I had known him for years. But I am feeling rather tired; I think I had better say good-night," added the girl.

She looked terribly white and weary, and there was a stricken look in the wistful eyes I had not specially observed.

"My dear, you are quite worn out," I said tenderly. "There, run away to bed, and I will come in and put out your candle and say 'Good-night,' presently."

When I went to her room the light was out, but she was still

awake. As I leant to kiss her she put her arms up round my neck, and I felt that she had been crying.

"Dear, you are feeling home-sick?" I whispered.

"Oh, the world *is* so hard," she wailed; "and there is so little love in it! But *you* are kind; you are so good to me."

The next day we were in the drawing-room at home, waiting for dinner. Kitty was seated in a low basket chair near the hearth, gazing silently into the fire, while Arthur, leaning back against the mantelpiece, had his brown eyes earnestly fixed on her face. I had felt nervous as to the effect she would make on him to-night, for when I met her on the stairs, I saw that her pretty yellowish-pink dress was made in the æsthetic fashion which Arthur so dislikes. He was very pleasant, however, and though he looked at her a good deal, there was no open disapproval in the glance. He had evidently made up his mind to endure the inevitable with a good grace, and no one who was not aware of his dislike to all Irish people, and all æstheticism, would have imagined for a moment that he was not quite happy in the presence of this girl.

"You feel tired with your journey, I am afraid?" he said to her presently.

"Thank you, no; I am quite rested," she replied without looking up.

"You are accustomed to travelling, perhaps?"

"No, I have never been more than fifty miles from Dublin before," she answered, with her eyes still fixed on the fire.

"Really? We must take you about a little, then," he said pleasantly, "and show you some of our sights."

She made no answer to this, nor did she seem in any way interested.

"Come, Arthur, don't worry the child with questions," said Mrs. Malleson; "she is tired out. One cannot cross that wretched water, and travel half a day in addition, without being knocked up."

"Indeed, I am not tired scarcely at all," said Kitty, looking up for the first time, and smiling sweetly across at Mrs. Malleson.

"Ah, what an Irish remark!" laughed the other.

"Oh, you will soon find that I am completely Irish," she said carelessly. "Not only in my words and ways, but in my feelings and opinions too."

"Dear me! Isn't dinner very late to-night?" I hastily interposed.

The gong sounded at that moment, to our great relief, and we hoped that Kitty would not make any more dangerous remarks likely to irritate Arthur. We found her very bright and amusing at table, and tenderly deferential and sweet whenever she spoke to Mrs. Malleson or myself; but she never addressed Arthur willingly, and in answer to his questions gave the most concise and chilly replies. He looked a little angry once or twice at her marked coldness, but

soon made fresh advances of friendliness, for no one could be angry with Kitty for long. He returned with us to the drawing-room after dinner, and was eager in seconding his mother's petition, that Kitty should sing to us. She took no notice of him at all, but answered Mrs. Malleson very readily.

"I will sing with pleasure if you like to hear," she said simply. "I know only a few old-fashioned songs, and I have never been taught, but I like to sing to myself."

Her "few old-fashioned songs" were the sweetest I had ever heard, and her voice the most touching and tender. It thrilled through our hearts as she sang, and brought tears to our eyes. Who would have thought that the girl who had made us laugh so readily at dinner, who spoke so simply and unaffectedly about herself, was capable of expressing all the passionate longing, and pain, and hopelessness which she threw into her voice? There was something pathetic in feeling that one so young and bright, should yet have the power of realising the misery of which life is possible.

"My dear," said Mrs. Malleson, when Kitty would sing no longer, "where did you learn to sing like that? It is very, very beautiful, but it hurts me to hear you; your life must have been so sad."

"Oh, no," she answered gently, looking gratefully at Mrs. Malleson. "One can *imagine* what it must be to be forsaken and heart-broken—don't you think so? It is much easier than to put oneself in the place of happy people. I am never able to sing *happy* songs."

"I shall make it my aim to find in London to-morrow some happy song which you *will* be able to sing," said Arthur, with a determined look in his eyes.

"Please don't," she answered coldly. "I will try to get some happy songs if it pains you to hear sad ones," she added to Mrs. Malleson.

"It only pains me if it implies sorrow of your own, my dear," spoke the elder lady.

"Then, please, I'll stick to my old ballads," said Kitty.

II.

"How foolish of her!" said Arthur in a vexed tone, as he stood gazing from the window with his hands in his pockets. "She will get a racking head-ache out there in this heat."

"What is it?" I asked, joining him at the window.

"Look!" he said, nodding his head in the direction of the terrace outside.

There, leaning over one of the surrounding flower-beds, was a slim, white-robed figure, bare-headed in the glaring noonday sun.

For the year had gone on to summertide; and the months had brought a change in the heart of Arthur Malleson. He loved Kitty Macrane.

"Foolish girl!" I said, looking at her as she bent there. "How it is that she neither tans nor freckles I cannot imagine, for she never puts on her hat if she can help it. I will take it to her; she'll get a sunstroke if she doesn't mind."

"No, don't trouble," said Arthur lazily. "I was just going out; I can take her the hat, and say you sent it."

I stayed at the window to see the result of his errand. Presently he appeared on the terrace with Kitty's shady garden hat in his hand. "It is much too sunny for you to be out with nothing on your head," he said, presenting the hat.

"Thank you, I don't want it," said Kitty frigidly. "If I had wished for a hat I should not have come out without one. Please take it back again."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," he answered, looking at her rather helplessly. "You are behaving like a silly child. You know you often get headaches these hot days."

"You must really allow me to dress as I please," she said, looking at him coldly. "You can, of course, meddle in the private concerns of your mother and Mrs. Lister, since they permit it, but I must decline your interference." And she turned her back on him and went on gathering her flowers.

He grew a little white, and bit his lip to keep down the passionate words that rose; then he spoke quietly and calmly: "Mrs. Lister sent me with your hat; she was afraid the sun would be bad for you. I suppose I must tell her that you——"

Kitty turned round hastily, a flush of shame on her face. "I beg your pardon," she said quickly, looking up at him with regretful eyes. "I ought not to have said that to you; it was very rude."

"And untrue," he added earnestly.

She hesitated, looking a little defiant; then she raised her eyes to his and said gently:

"Yes, and untrue. Do you forgive me now?"

"Why yes," he answered, smiling gladly. "That is the kindest thing you have ever said to me, that retraction. And now about the hat: what am I to do with it?"

"I will put it on, as Mrs. Lister sent it," she said gravely, taking it from him.

"And why not when I asked you to do so?" he went on, reproach in his tone.

"Because I did not choose," she answered promptly. "It is a mark of an Irishwoman, you know, to think her own way best."

"But why be so inconsistent? You are not following your own will now."

"Oh yes, I am. My will at present is to please Mrs. Lister."

"Will it ever be your will to please me, Kitty?" he said rather sadly.

"I expect it would be impossible, Mr. Malleson."

"Not if you try. *Do* try: indeed it would not be difficult."

"I don't think I care to," she responded coolly. "I do not think the game would be worth the candle."

"Just as you please," he rejoined proudly and bitterly. "Perhaps it amuses you to torture me? If so, your life here must be full of amusement, Kitty."

"Mr. Malleson, I prefer to hear you call me by my surname."

"And I prefer your Christian name; I like it better."

"You are not privileged to address me by it."

"No? I think I am. You call my mother aunt, and you know I am a cousin, though a distant one. Kitty is such a dear little name," he added tenderly.

"It is only the people I love, who are allowed to call me Kitty," she retorted, in a cutting tone. "If you wish to exercise your cousin's privilege, call me 'Paddy;' that was the name the only person I ever hated gave me."

"You are cruel, Miss Macrane," he said, deeply hurt. "I am going in; I will not trouble you with my presence longer."

"Thank you." Presently she came in with the flowers and began to arrange them in the glasses, but with less interest than usual. I inquired what the matter was. She was not feeling happy, she answered. Somehow the world seemed out of joint. To me she looked as if oppressed with a sense of guilt.

"Kitty, have you and Arthur been quarrelling?"

"As if I should condescend to quarrel with him!" she rejoined, her face all in a blush. "I daresay he did not like some things I said."

"You are very wrong and foolish, my dear."

"I daresay I am. Indeed, I know I am. Of course I need not show myself *quite* so uncivil. I will put some flowers in his study Mrs. Lister; that will tell him I am sorry."

She ran up to her room to bring down a most treasured vase that was there, and filled it daintily with her choicest flowers. "There! if that dosn't soothe his ruffled feelings, I don't know what will!" she said, as she critically eyed her work, and I wondered whether she was speaking in mockery.

His study was empty, and Kitty put her peace-offering down on his writing table. She had never been there at her leisure before, and she now looked round with pleased eyes at the prettily arranged room. Above the writing table hung a painting of Arthur's father. Kitty was looking intently on this, tracing the likeness between father and son, when a voice at her side rose quietly.

"It is considered a good portrait." And the girl started in surprise, and turned quickly to meet Arthur's gaze.

"I—I beg your pardon," she said; "I thought I was quite alone; I am very sorry; I will go at once."

"Pray don't let me drive you away," he answered coldly. Then,

as his eyes fell on the flowers, "You meant them for me?" he cried, more gently. "That was good of you."

"Oh!" said Kitty, impulsively, "I am sorry for what I said just now; I did not mean it, really; it is only my nasty temper. And—and you may call me——"

"Kitty?" he whispered, his face lighting up. "May I really?"

"I was going to say *Kathleen*," she said timidly. "Perhaps when I get used to that I may not mind—the other."

"Well, I will try to be content with that at present. And it is very kind of you—thank you so much."

"Oh, not at all," returned Kitty, making her escape.

A few days after this Kitty became ill with the heat. In her usual reckless fashion she had stayed out in the blazing sun without anything on her head, and the result was a most intense headache. It was the more unfortunate since Mrs. Malleson and I were going out to dine at a distance, and Arthur was in London. But Kitty declared she should be quite happy alone; that solitude would be good for her, in order that she might for once meditate on the error of her ways. So we drove away soon after six o'clock.

Later, when Kitty had sent her dinner away nearly untouched, Arthur walked in. He explained that he had been able to "pair" for a week, and had come home for a short holiday.

"You are looking ill," he said tenderly. "What is it? How could they leave you alone like this?"

"Oh, they had to go to the dinner," replied Kitty. "They didn't want to, they are very careful of me; it is only a headache. I stayed out in the sun this morning: of course without a hat," she added, with a sly smile.

"But you get these headaches so often," he cried anxiously. "Don't you think you ought to have some advice, Kathleen?"

"Oh, no; please don't talk of that! I am perfectly well, and as happy as a grig, thank you."

"I should never dare to insist on anything with you, Kathleen. You have at least taught me how overbearing I am."

She looked at him in surprise for a moment, and then answered gravely. "Yes, I think you are; you are too masterful. But you are much less so than you were."

"I do try to be less so, indeed, Kathleen; but it is up-hill work, struggling against the habits of a life-time!"

He looked so humble, and was evidently so much in earnest, that Kitty felt touched. "It must be very difficult," she said in a sympathising tone. "I do not see how you could have helped becoming so, left as you were with only your mother to guide you, and she adoring you and giving up to you in everything. It has not been your fault."

"Kitty, I don't know you under this aspect at all," he said, looking into her eyes. "You have not given me one unkind word or look since I came in. Is it because of your headache?"

"No, I have been meditating," answered Kitty slowly. "You may look amazed if you like; I know it is an unprecedented thing in the annals of my life; and I have discovered that I have judged you very harshly, and perhaps wrongly. I wanted to tell you that I am sorry; *that* is no new thing I am afraid, but I mean to reform, and I hope that I shall not need to be for ever asking pardon for my injustice."

"Oh, Kitty!" he said passionately. "I deserve every harsh thought you may have had of me; every word you have said! Do not grieve or think that *you* have been wrong. Just give me a word of kindness now and then, and I will struggle to—be—quite different."

Kitty did not answer in words—perhaps her heart was too full; but she laid her hand in his. He bent his head and kissed it reverently.

Kitty told me all about it when I got home and went to her room to wish her good-night: she was always a sweet little maid to me, and confided all her secrets.

After this, life went on more smoothly at Kenmore; we had not the constant dread of quarrels which had hitherto marred our domestic peace. A great change had come over Arthur; indeed it had been coming before this. He never laid down the law as he had been accustomed to do, or disclaimed dictatorially against women's rights, æstheticism, Ireland, and the like. His opinions on these subjects may have remained unchanged, but if so, he had learnt to keep his views to himself.

Kitty, too, was not quite the same; her snubbing coldness to Arthur was a thing of the past; yet she was varying in her moods to him, and I used often to wonder at his patience with her; he, who had always had things arranged according to his own pleasure.

One evening we were all in the drawing-room after dinner, Mrs. Malleson and I sat playing chess at the end of the room; over her shoulder I could clearly see the two young people, who were nearer the fire—for Autumn weather was drawing on.

"Won't you sing something?" said Arthur. "You have not sung for days."

"If you like," said Kitty, going over to the piano. "What shall it be?"

"Robin Adair."

"Oh, that is so sentimental," she objected. "I am tired of those love-sick songs; I have no patience with people who go about confiding their woes to the general public!"

"Kitty, how unlike you!" he said, expostulatingly.

"Well, I haven't!" she continued. "I think it shows a great want of good taste; and I don't much believe in the reality of those love-raptures one reads about."

"Oh, well, if you are in this mood, I give you up. You are

perfectly incomprehensible to me sometimes. Pray had you the same ideas yesterday, when I found you in tears over 'James Lee's Wife?'"

"I never have the same ideas two minutes together," she said, flippantly. "Haven't you discovered that yet?"

"I see what you are driving at," said Arthur, a little sadly. "But it is no use, Kitty, nothing could make me believe you cynical; you may as well cease your efforts, I know you too well now ever to be shaken in my belief in you."

"If you have already formed you conclusions about me, of course nothing will alter them," said Kitty, resignedly. "I felt that I should like to correct them a little; that was all."

"Don't sing now, Kitty," he entreated, as she seated herself before the piano. "Don't spoil my evening by singing in this contrary mood."

"You need not listen," she said; "I won't sing very loud."

Arthur went back to his seat, and buried his face in a newspaper, completely turning his back on the piano. But very soon the paper was laid down, and he sat in rapt silence so as to catch every note that rose and fell on his ear. Kitty was singing "Soft and Low," that exquisite lullaby of Tennyson's. Her voice was almost a whisper in its tender, caressing tone; contradicting effectually, the hard, cynical speeches she had just made.

"There! that is sweeter than those love songs," she said, as she went and sat down opposite Arthur.

"Thank you, Kitty; thank you."

Kitty's varying moods must have been a trial to Arthur at this time; he could never be sure how to take her; she was gentle and kind one hour, flippant or cynical the next, but never just what he wished. He had been in love with her for a long time now; indeed, ever since he saw her first, many months ago; but he had never told her of his love: she knew how to prevent that. This uncertainty was preying on his health; he was paler and thinner than of old, and his spirits fluctuated according to Kitty's moods. At last I determined to speak, and said perhaps more than I had meant to say. Kitty was frightfully distressed; she had never realised how much Arthur suffered; had never noticed how ill and worn he was looking.

"I have been wilful and wicked," she said, with tears. "I thought —yes, I did—long ago, that—that he liked me; but I would not be kind to him because of what I had heard of him. He *was* cruel about me before I came, Mrs. Lister."

"My dear, it was only for a moment," I said. "He acknowledged his fault at once, and said that he had been cruel and selfish, and had not thought of how lonely and unprotected you must be. And he had not seen you then, Kitty."

"Well, I did think it unmanly to speak like that about a lonely, unhappy girl. I made up my mind that night at Liverpool never to

be nice to him. And since then I kept it up out of bravado; and, Mrs. Lister, it is all just my obstinate temper. Wicked, ungrateful girl that I have been!"

Kitty was in the library one afternoon, as it was growing dusk, curled up on the hearth-rug and reading by fire-light, as she loved to do. She heard the door open, and saw Arthur come in, but she did not move, hoping that he would not see her in the dim light of the room; but he at once caught sight of the little figure. She rose then, and seated herself more decorously in the arm-chair, while he moved up and stood leaning against the mantelpiece, looking down at her.

"What have you been reading?" he asked. "Browning again? You are fond of Browning."

"Yes; I have been reading 'Andrea del Sarto.' Is it not beautiful?"

"Very beautiful, but very sad."

"Yes; life *is* sad."

"Oh, no," said Arthur; "life is very sweet."

"I suppose life is very much what we make it," replied Kitty. "It is sad when we have been wicked, as *I* have been."

"You! Oh, no, no."

"Yes, I have," she insisted. "I have been wicked ever since I came here. I have had hard thoughts about you, and I have been wrong to you always. But I am sorry now; I am *very* sorry now. I wish I could show you how sorry."

"You can, if you like," said Arthur, passionately, as he drew to her side and took her hand. "You know how I love you, my darling! I have loved you ever since the first night you came. Only say you will love me sometime, Kitty; say you will *try* to love me!"

"There is no need to try," whispered Kitty, glancing at him with her great tender eyes. "I have always—*cared* for you, I think, Arthur—just a little, you know; and that was why I was so cruel, you see."

M. L. GOW.

SPARED.

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Frontispiece.

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1887.

IN LATER YEARS.

I THINK it must have been the illness he had in the summer that tended to finaily break down Valentine Chandler. He had been whirling along all kinds of doubtful ways before, but when a sort of low fever attacked him, and he had to lie by for weeks, he was about done for.

That's how we found it when we got to Crabb Cot in October. Valentine, what with illness, his wild ways and his ill-luck, had come to grief, and was about to emigrate to Canada. His once flourishing practice had run away from him ; no prospect seemed left to him in the old country.

"It is an awful pity!" I remarked to Mrs. Cramp, having overtaken her in the Islip Road, as she was walking towards home.

"Ay, it is that, Johnny Ludlow," she said, turning her comely face to me, the strings of her black bonnet tied in a big bow under her chin. "Not much else was to be expected, taking all things into consideration. George Chandler, Tom's brother, makes a right good thing of it in Canada, farming, and Val is going to him."

"We hear that Val's mother is leaving North Villa."

"She can't afford to stay in it now," returned Mrs. Cramp. "She has let it to the Miss Dennets, and taken a pretty little place for herself in Crabb. Georgiana has gone out as a governess."

"Will she like that?"

"Ah, Master Johnny! There are odd moments throughout all our lives when we have to do things we don't like any more than we like poison.—I hate to look at the place," cried Mrs. Cramp, energetically. "When I think of Mrs. Jacob's having to turn out of it, and all through Val's folly, it gives me the creeps."

This applied to North Villa, of which we then were abreast. Mrs. Cramp turned her face from it, and went on sideways, like a crab.

"Why, here's Jane Preen!"

She was coming along quietly in the afternoon sunshine. I thought her altered. The once pretty blush-rose of her dimpled cheeks had

faded; in her soft blue eyes, so like Oliver's, lay a look of sadness. He had been dead about a year now. But the blush came back again, and the eyes lighted up with smiles as I took her hand. Mrs. Cramp went on; she was in a hurry to reach her home, which lay between Islip and Crabb. Jane rang the bell at North Villa.

"Shall I take a run over to Duck Brook to-morrow, Jane, and sit with you in the Inlets, and we'll have a spell of gossip together?"

"I never sit in the Inlets now," she said, in a half whisper, turning her face away.

"Forgive me, Jane," I cried, repenting my thoughtlessness; and she disappeared up the garden path.

Susan opened the door. Her mistress was out, she said, but Miss Clementina was at home. It was Clementina that Jane wanted to see.

Valentine, still weak, was lying on the sofa in the parlour when Jane entered. He got up, all excitement at seeing her, and they sat down together.

"I brought this for Clementina," she said, placing a paper parcel on the table. "It is a pattern which she asked me for. Are you growing stronger?"

"Clementina is about somewhere," he observed; "the others are out. Yes, I am growing stronger; but it seems to me that I am a long while about it."

They sat on in silence, side by side, neither speaking. Valentine took Jane's hand and held it within his own, which rested on his knee. It seemed that they had lost their tongues—as we say to the children.

"Is it all decided?" asked Jane presently. "Quite decided?"

"Quite, Jane. Nothing else is left for me."

She caught up her breath with one of those long sighs that tell of inward tribulation.

"I should have been over to see you before this, Jane, but that my legs would not carry me to Duck Brook and back again without sitting down by the wayside. And you—you hardly ever come here now."

A deep flush passed swiftly over Jane's face. She had not liked to call at the troubled house. And she very rarely came so far as Crabb now: there seemed to be no plea for it.

"What will be the end, Val?" she whispered.

Valentine groaned. "I try not to think of it, my dear. When I cannot put all thought of the future from me, it gives me more torment than I know how to bear. If only ——"

The door opened, and in came Clementina, arresting what he had been about to say.

"This is the pattern you asked me for, Clementina," Jane said, rising to depart on her return home. For she would not risk passing the Inlets after sunset.

A week or two went by, and the time of Valentine Chandler's

departure arrived. He had grown well and strong apparently, and went about to say Good-bye to people in a subdued fashion. The Squire took him apart when Val came for that purpose to us, and talked to him in private. Tod called it a "Curtain Lecture." Valentine was to leave Crabb at daybreak on the Saturday morning for London, and go at once on board the ship lying in the docks about to steam away for Quebec.

It perhaps surprised none of us who knew the Chandler girls that they should be seen tearing over the parish on the Friday afternoon to invite people to tea. "It will be miserably dull this last evening, you know, Johnny," they said to me in their flying visit; "we couldn't stand it alone. Be sure to come in early: and leave word that Joseph Todhetley is to join us as soon as he gets back again." For Tod had gone out.

According to orders, I was at North Villa betimes: and, just as on that other afternoon, I met Jane Preen at the gate. She had walked in from Duck Brook.

"You are going to spend the evening here, Jane?"

"Yes, it is the last evening," she sighed. "Valentine wished it."

"The girls have been to invite me; wouldn't let me say No. There's to be quite a party."

"A party!" exclaimed Jane, in surprise.

"If they could manage to get one up."

"I am sure Valentine did not know that this morning."

"I daresay not. I asked the girls if Valentine wanted a crowd there on his last evening, and they exclaimed that Valentine never knew what was good for him."

"As you are here, Johnny," she went on, after a pause of silence, "I wonder if you would mind my asking you to do me a favour? It is to walk home with me after tea. I shall not be late this evening."

"Of course I will, Jane."

"I *cannot* go past the Inlets alone after dark," she whispered. "I never do so by daylight but a dreadful shiver seizes me. I—I'm afraid of seeing something."

"Have you ever seen it since that first evening, Jane?"

"Never since. Never once. I do not suppose that I shall ever see it again; but the fear lies upon me."

She went on to explain that the gig could not be sent for her that evening, as Mr. Preen had gone to Alcester in it and taken Sam. Her mood and voice seemed strangely subdued, as if all spirit had left her for ever.

In spite of their efforts, the Miss Chandlers met with little luck. One of the Letsom girls and Tom Coney were all the recruits they were able to pick up. They came dashing in close upon our heels. In the hall stood Valentine's luggage locked and corded, ready for conveyance to the station.

There's not much to relate of that evening: I hardly know why I

allude to it at all—only that these painful records sometimes bring a sad sort of soothing to the weary heart, causing it to look forward to that other life where will be no sorrow and no parting.

Tod came in after tea. He and Coney kept the girls alive, if one might judge by the laughter that echoed from the other room. Tea remained on the table for anyone else who might arrive but Mrs. Jacob Chandler had turned from it to put her feet on the fender. She kept me by her, asking about a slight accident which had happened to one of our servants. Valentine and Jane were standing at the doors of the open window in silence, as if they wanted to take in a view of the garden. And that state of things continued, as it seemed to me, for a good half-hour.

It was a wild night, but very warm for November. White clouds scudded across the face of the sky; moonlight streamed into the room. The fire was low, and the green shade had been placed over the lamp, so that there seemed to be no light but that of the moon.

"Won't you sing a song for the last time, Valentine?" I heard Jane ask him with half a sob.

"Not to night; I'm not equal to it. But, yes, I will; one song," he added, turning round. "Night and day that one song has been ever haunting me, Jane."

He was sitting down to the piano when Mrs. Cramp came in. She said she would go up to take her bonnet off, and Mrs. Chandler went with her. This left me alone at the fire. I should have made a start for the next room where the laughing was, but that I did not like to disturb the song then begun. Jane stood listening just outside the open window, her back against its frame, her hands covering her bent face.

Whether the circumstances and surroundings made an undue impression on me, I know not, but the song struck me as being the most plaintive one I had ever heard and singularly appropriate to that present hour. The singer was departing beyond seas, leaving one he loved hopelessly behind him.

"Remember me, though rolling ocean place its bounds 'twixt thee and me,
Remember me with fond emotion, and believe I'll think of thee."

So it began; and I wish I could recollect how it went on, but I can't; only a line here and there. I think it was set to the tune of Weber's Last Waltz, but I'm not sure. There came a line "My lingering look from thine will sever only with an aching heart;" there came another bit towards the end: "But fail not to remember me."

Nothing in themselves, you will say, these lines; their charm lay in the singing. To listen to their mournful pathos, brought with it a strange intensity of pain. Valentine sang them as very few can sing. That his heart was aching, aching with a bitterness which can never be pictured except by those who have felt it; that Jane's heart was

aching as she listened, was all too evident. You could feel the anguish of their souls. It was in truth a ballad singularly applicable to the time and place.

The song ceased; the music died away. Jane moved from the piano with a sob that could no longer be suppressed. Valentine sat still and motionless. As to me, I made a quiet glide of it into the other room, just as Mrs. Cramp and Mrs. Jacob Chandler were coming in for some tea. Julietta seized me on one side and Fanny Letsom on the other; they were going in for forfeits.

Valentine Chandler left the piano and went out, looking for Jane. Not seeing her, he followed on down the garden path, treading on its dry, dead leaves. The wind, sighing and moaning, played amid the tree-branches, nearly bare now; every other minute the moon was obscured by the flying clouds. Warm though the night was, and grand in its aspect, signs might be detected of the approaching winter.

Jane Preen was standing near the old garden arbour, from which could be seen by daylight the long chain of the beautiful Malvern Hills. Valentine drew Jane within, and seated her by his side.

"Our last meeting; our last parting, Jane!" he whispered from the depth of his full heart.

"Will it be for ever?" she wailed.

He took time to answer. "I would willingly say No; I would *promise* it to you, Jane, but that I doubt myself. I know that it lies with me; and I know that if God will help me, I may be able to ——"

He broke down. He could not go on. Jane bent her head towards him. Drawing it to his shoulder, he continued:

"I have not been able to pull up here, despite the resolutions I have made from time to time. I was one of a fast set of men at Islip, and—somehow—they were stronger than I was. In Canada it may be different. I promise you, my darling, that I will strive to make it so. Do you think this is no lesson to me?"

"If not ——"

"If not, we may never see each other again in this world."

"Oh, Valentine!"

"Only in Heaven. The mistakes we make here may be righted there."

"And will it be *nothing* to you, never to see me again here?—no sorrow or pain?"

"*No sorrow or pain!*" Valentine echoed the words out of the very depths of woe. Even then the pain within him was almost greater than he could bear.

They sat on in silence, with their aching hearts. Words fail in an hour of anguish such as this. An hour that comes perhaps but once in a lifetime; to some of us, never. Jane's face lay nestled

against his shoulder; her hand was in his clasp. Val's tears were falling; he was weak yet from his recent illness; Jane's despair was beyond tears.

We were in the height and swing of our forfeits when Valentine and Jane came in. They could not remain in the arbour all night, you see, romantic and lovely though it might be to sit in the moonlight. Jane said she must be going home; her mother had charged her not to be late.

When she came down with her things on, I, remembering what she had asked me, took my hat and waited for her in the hall. But Valentine came out with her.

"Thank you all the same, Johnny," she said to me. And I went back to the forfeits.

They went off together, Jane's arm within his—their last walk, perhaps, in this world. But it seemed that they could not talk any more than they did in the garden, and went along for the most part in silence. Just before turning into Brook Lane they met Tom Chandler—he who was doing so much for Valentine in this emigration matter. He had come from Islip to spend a last hour with his cousin.

"Go on, Tom; you'll find them all at home," said Valentine. "I shall not be very long after you."

Upon coming to the Inlets, Jane clung closer to Valentine's arm. It was here that she had seen her unfortunate brother Oliver standing, after his death. Valentine hastily passed his arm round her to impart a sense of protection.

At the gate they parted, taking their farewell hand-shake, their last kiss. "God help you, my dear!" breathed Valentine. "And if—if we never meet again, believe that no other will ever love you as I have loved."

He turned back on the road he had come, and Jane went in to her desolate home.

II.

"Aunt Mary Ann, I've come back, and brought a visitor with me!"

Mrs. Mary Ann Cramp, superintending the preserving of a pan of morella cherries over the fire in her spacious kitchen, turned round in surprise. I was perched on the arm of the old oak chair, watching the process. I had gone to the farm with a message from Crabb Cot, and Mrs. Cramp, ignoring ceremony, called me into the kitchen.

Standing at the door, with the above announcement, was Julietta Chandler. She had been away on a fortnight's visit.

"Now where on earth did you spring from, Juliet?" asked Mrs. Cramp. "I did not expect you to-day. A visitor? Who is it?"

"Cherry Dawson, Aunt Mary Ann; and I didn't think it mattered about letting you know," returned Juliet. They had given up the

longer name, Julietta. "You can see her if you look through the window; she is getting out of the fly at the gate. Cherry Dawson is the nicest and jolliest girl in the world, and you'll all be in love with her—including you, Johnny Ludlow."

Sure enough, there she was, springing from the fly which had brought them from Crabb station. A light airy figure in a fresh brown-holland dress and flapping Leghorn hat. The kitchen window was open, and we could hear her voice all that way off, laughing loudly at something and chattering to the driver. She was very fair, with pretty white teeth, and a pink colour on her saucy face.

Mrs. Cramp left Sally to the cherries, went to the hall door and opened it herself, calling the other maid, Joan, to come down. The visitor flew in with a run and a sparkling laugh, and at once kissed Mrs. Cramp on both cheeks, without saying, With your leave or By your leave. I think she would not have minded kissing me, for she came dancing up and shook my hand.

"It's Johnny Ludlow, Cherry," said Juliet.

"Oh, how delightful!" cried Miss Cherry—and with that she took the other hand and shook that also.

She was really very unsophisticated; or—very much the other way. One cannot quite tell at a first moment. But, let her be which she might, there was one thing about her that took the eyes by storm. It was her hair.

Whether her rapid movements had unfastened it, or whether she wore it so, I knew not, but it fell on her shoulders like a shower of gold. Her small face seemed to be set in an amber aureole. I had never before seen hair so absolutely resembling the colour of pure gold. As she ran back to Mrs. Cramp from me, it glittered in the sunlight. The shower of gold in which Jupiter went courting Danäe could hardly have been more seductive than this.

"I know you don't mind my coming uninvited, you dear Mrs. Cramp!" she exclaimed joyously. "I did so want to make your acquaintance. And Clementina was growing such a cross-patch. It's not Tim's fault if he can't come back yet. Is it now?"

"I do not know anything about it," answered Mrs. Cramp, apparently not quite sure what to make of her.

With this additional company I thought it well to come away, and wished them good morning. At the gate stood the fly still, the horse resting.

"Like to take a lift, Mr. Johnny, as far as your place?" asked the man civilly. "I am just starting back."

"No thank you, Lease," I answered. "I am going across to Duck Brook."

"Curious young party that, ain't it, sir?" said Lease, pointing the whip over his shoulder towards the house. "She went and asked me if Mrs. Cramp warn't an old Image, born in the year One, and didn't she get her gowns out of Noah's Ark? And while I was

staring at her saying that, she went off into shouts of laughter enough to frighten the horse. Did you see her hair, sir?"

I nodded.

"For my part, I don't favour that bright yaller for hair, Mr. Johnny. I never knew but one woman have such, and she was more deceitful than a she-fox."

Lease touched his hat, and drove off. He was cousin in a remote degree to poor Maria Lease, and to Lease the pointsman who had caused the accident to the train at Crabb junction and died of the trouble. At that moment, Fred Scott came up; a short, dark young fellow, with fierce black whiskers, good-natured and rather soft. He was fond of playing billiards at the Bell at Islip; had been doing it for some years now.

"I say, Ludlow, has that fly come with Juliet Chandler? Is she back again?"

"Just come. She has brought someone with her: a girl with golden hair"

"Oh bother *her!*" returned Fred. "But it has been as dull as ditchwater without Juliet."

He dashed in at Mrs. Cramp's gate and up the winding path. I turned into the Islip Road, and crossed it to take Brook Lane. The leaves were beginning to put on the tints of autumn; the grain was nearly all gathered.

Time the healer! As Mrs. Todhetley says, it may well be called so. Heaven in mercy sends it to the sick and heavy-laden with healing on its wings. Nearly three years had slipped by since the departure for Canada of Valentine Chandler; four years since the tragic death of Oliver Preen.

There are few changes to record. Things and people were for the most part going on as they had done. It was reported that Valentine had turned over a new leaf from the hour he landed over yonder, becoming thoroughly staid and steady. Early in the summer of this year his mother had shut up her cottage at North Crabb to go to Guernsey, on the invitation of a sister, from whom she had expectations. Upon this, Julietta, who lived with her mother, went on a long visit to Mrs. Cramp.

Clementina had married. Her husband was a Mr. Timothy Dawson, junior partner in a wholesale firm of general merchants in Birmingham; they had also a house in New York. Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Dawson lived in a white villa at Edgbaston, and went in for style and fashion. At least she did, which might go without telling. The family in which her sister Georgiana was governess occupied another white villa hard by.

Close upon Juliet's thus taking up her residence with her aunt, finding perhaps the farm rather dull, she struck up a flirtation with Fred Scott, or he with her. They were everlastingly together, mooning about Mrs. Cramp's grounds, or sauntering up and down the Islip

Road. Juliet gave out that they were engaged. No one believed it. At present Fred had nothing to marry upon : his mother, just about as soft as himself, supplied him with as much pocket-money as he asked for, and there his funds ended.

Juliet had now returned from a week or two's visit she had been paying Clementina, bringing with her, uninvited, the young lady with the golden hair. That hair seemed to be before my eyes as a picture as I walked along. She was Timothy Dawson's young half-sister. Both the girls had grown tired of staying with Clementina, who worried herself and everyone about her just now, because her husband was detained longer than he had anticipated in New York, whither he had gone on business.

Mr. Frederick Scott had said "Bother" in contempt when he first heard of the visitor with the golden hair. He did not say it long. Miss Cherry Dawson cast a spell upon him. He had never met such a rattling, laughing girl in all his born days, which was how he phrased it ; had never seen such bewildering hair. Cherry fascinated him. Forgetting his allegiance to Juliet, faithless swain that he was, he went right over to the enemy. Miss Cherry, nothing loth, accepted his homage openly, and enjoyed the raging jealousy of Juliet.

In the midst of this, Juliet received a telegram from Edgbaston. Her sister Clementina was taken suddenly ill and wanted her. She must take the first train.

"Of course you are coming with me, Cherry ! " said Juliet.

"Of course I am not," laughed Cherry. "I'm very happy here—if dear Mrs. Cramp will let me stay with her. You'll be back again in a day or two."

Not seeing any polite way to send her away in the face of this, Mrs. Cramp let her stay on. Juliet was away a week—and a nice time the other one and Fred had of it, improving the shining hours with soft speeches and love-making. When Juliet got back again, she felt ready to turn herself into a female Bluebeard, and cut off Cherry's golden hair.

Close upon that Mrs. Cramp held her harvest-home. "You may as well come early, and we'll have tea on the lawn," she said, when inviting us.

It was a fine afternoon, warm as summer, though September was drawing to its close. Many of the old friends you have heard of were there. Mary MacEveril and her cousin Dick, who seemed to be carrying on a little with one another, as Tod called it ; the Letsoms, boys and girls ; Emma Chandler, who looked younger than ever, though she could boast of two babies : and others. Jane Preen was there, the weary look which her mild and pretty face had gained latterly very plainly to be seen. We roamed at will about the grounds, and had tea under the large weeping elm tree. Altogether the gathering brought forcibly to mind that other gathering ; that of

the pic-nic, four summers ago, when we had sung songs in light-hearted glee, and poor Oliver Preen must have been ready to die of mortal pain.

The element of interest to-day lay in Miss Cherry Dawson. In her undisguised assumption of ownership in Fred Scott, and in Juliet Chandler's rampant jealousy of the pair. You should have seen the girl flitting about like a fairy, in her white muslin frock, the golden shower of curls falling around her like nothing but threads of transparent amber. Fred was evidently very far gone. Juliet wore white also.

Whether things would have come that evening to the startling pass they did, but for an unfortunate remark made in thoughtless fun, not in malice, I cannot tell. It gave a sting to Juliet that she could not bear. A ridiculous pastime was going on. Some of them were holding hands in a circle and dancing round to the "House that Jack Built," each one reciting a sentence in turn. If you forgot your sentence, you paid a forfeit. The one falling to Juliet Chandler was "This is the maiden all forlorn." "Why, that's exactly what you are, Juliet!" cried Tom Coney, impulsively, and a laugh went round. Juliet said nothing, but I saw her face change to the hue of death. The golden hair of the other damsel was gleaming just then within view amidst the trees, accompanied by the black head and black whiskers of Mr. Fred Scott.

"That young man must have a rare time of it between the two," whispered Tod to me. "As good as the ass between the bundles of hay."

At dusk began the fun of the harvest-home. Mrs. Cramp's labourers and their wives sat in the large kitchen at an abundant board. Hot beef, mutton and hams crowded it with vegetables; and of fruit pies and tarts there was a goodly show. Some of us helped to wait on them, and that was the best fun of all.

They had all taken as much as they could possibly eat, and were in the full glee of cider and beer and delight; a young man in a clean white smock-frock was sheepishly indulging the table with a song: "Young Roger of the Valley," and I was laughing till I had to hold my sides; when Mrs. Cramp touched me on the back. She sat with the Miss Dennets, in the little parlour off the kitchen, in full view of the company. I sat on the door-sill between them.

"Johnny," she whispered, "I don't see Juliet and Cherry Dawson. Have they been in at all?"

I did not remember to have seen them; or Fred Scott either.

"Just go out and look for the two girls, will you, Johnny. It's too late for them to be out, though it is a warm night. Tell them I say they are to come in at once," said Mrs. Cramp.

Not half a stone's throw from the house I found them—quarrelling. Their noisy voices guided me. A brilliant moon lighted up the scene. The young ladies were taunting one another; Juliet in frantic

passion; Cherry in sarcastic mockery. Fred Scott, after trying in vain to throw oil upon the troubled waters, had given it up as hopeless, and stood leaning against a tree in silent patience.

"It's quite true," Cherry was saying tauntingly when I got up. "We *are* engaged. We shall be married shortly. Come!"

"You are not," raved Juliet, her voice trembling with the intense rage she was in. "He was engaged to me before you came here; he is engaged to me still."

Cherry laughed out in mockery. "Dear me! old maids do deceive themselves so!"

Very hard, that, and Juliet winced. She was five or six years older than the fairy. How Fred relished the bringing home to him of his sins, I leave you to judge.

"I say, can't you have done with this, you silly girls?" he cried out meekly.

"In a short time you'll have our wedding-cards," went on Cherry. "It's all arranged. He's only waiting for me to decide whether it shall take place here or at Gretna Green."

Juliet dashed round to face Fred Scott. "If this be true; if you do behave in this false way to me, I'll not survive it," she said, hardly able to bring the words out in her storm of passion. "Do you hear me? I'll not live to see it, I say; and my ghost shall haunt her for her whole life after."

"Come now, easy, Juliet," pleaded Fred uncomfortably. "It's all nonsense, you know."

"I think it is; I think she is saying this to aggravate me," assented Juliet, subsiding to a sort of calmness. "If not, take you warning, Cherry Dawson, for I'll keep my word. My apparition shall haunt you for ever and ever."

"It had better begin to-night, then, for you'll soon find out that it's as true as gospel," retorted Cherry.

Managing at last to get in a word, I delivered Mrs. Cramp's message: they were to come in instantly. Fred obeyed it with immense relief and ran in before me. The two girls would follow, I concluded, when their jarring had spent itself. The last glimpse I had of them, they were stretching out their faces at each other like a couple of storks. Juliet's straw hat had fallen from the back of her head and was hanging by its strings round her neck.

"Oh, they're coming," spoke up Fred, in answer to Mrs. Cramp. "It's very nice out there; the moon's bright as day."

And presently I heard the laugh of Cherry Dawson amidst us. Her golden hair, her scarlet cheeks and her blue eyes were all sparkling together.

III.

It was the next morning. We were at breakfast, answering Mr. and Mrs. Todhetley's questions about the harvest home, when old Thomas

came in, all sad and scared, to tell some news. Juliet Chandler was dead: she had destroyed herself.

Of course the Squire at once attacked Thomas for saying it. But a sick feeling of conviction arose within me that it was true. One of the servants, out of doors on an errand, had heard it from a man in the road. The Squire sat rubbing his face, which had turned hot.

Leaving the breakfast table, I started for Mrs. Cramp's. Miss Susan Dennet was standing at her gate, her white handkerchief thrown over her head, her pale face limp with fright.

"Johnny," she called to me, "have you heard? Do you think it can be true?"

"Well, I hope not, Miss Susan. I am now going there to see. What I'm thinking of is this—if it is not true, how can such a report have arisen?"

Tod caught me up, and we found the farm in distress and commotion. It was all true; and poor Mrs. Cramp was almost dumb with dismay. These were the particulars: The previous evening, Juliet did not appear at the late supper, laid in the dining-room for the guests; at least, no one remembered to have seen her. Later, when the guests had left, and Mrs. Cramp was in the kitchen busy with her maids, Cherry Dawson looked in, bed-candle in hand, to say good-night. "I suppose Juliet is going up with you," remarked Mrs. Cramp. "Oh, Juliet went up ages ago," said Cherry, in answer.

The night passed quietly. Early in the morning one of the farm men went to the eel-pond to put in a net, and saw some clothes lying on the brink. Rushing indoors, he brought out Sally. She knew the things at once. There lay the white dress and the pink ribbons which Juliet had worn the night before; the straw hat, and a small fleecy handkerchief which she had tied round her neck at sundown. Pinned to the sash and the dress was a piece of paper, on which was written in ink, in a large hand—Juliet's hand:

"I SAID I WOULD DO IT; AND I WILL HAUNT HER FOR EVERMORE."

Of course she had taken these things off and left them on the bank, with the memorandum pinned to them, to make known that she had flung herself into the pond.

"I can scarcely believe it; it seems so incredible," sighed poor Mrs. Cramp to the Squire, who had come bustling in. "Juliet, as I should have thought, was one of the very last girls to do such a thing."

The next to appear upon the scene, puffing and panting with agitation, was Fred Scott. He asked which of the two girls it was, having heard only a garbled account; and now learned that it was Juliet. As to Cherry Dawson, she was shut up in her bedroom in shrieking hysterics. Men were preparing to drag the pond in search of——well, what was lying there.

The pond was at the end of the garden, near the fence that divided it from the three-acre field. Nothing had been disturbed. The white frock and pink ribbons were lying with the paper pinned to them; the hat was close by. A yard off was the white woollen handkerchief; and near it I saw the faded bunch of mignonette which Juliet had worn in her waistband. It looked as if she had flung the things off in desperation.

Standing later in the large parlour, listening to comments and opinions, one question troubled me—Ought I to tell what I knew of the quarrel? It might look like treachery towards Scott and the girl upstairs; but, should that poor dead Juliet——

The doubt was suddenly solved for me.

"What I want to get at is this," urged the Squire: "did anything happen to drive her to this? One doesn't throw oneself into an eel-pond for nothing in one's sober senses."

"Miss Juliet and Miss Dawson had a quarrel out o' doors last night," struck in Joan, for the two servants were assisting at the conference. "Sally heard 'em."

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Cramp. "Speak up."

"Well, it's true, ma'am," said Sally, coming forward. "I went out to shake a tray-cloth, and heard voices at a distance, all in a rage like; so I just stepped on a bit to see what it meant. The two young lasses was snarling at one another like anything. Miss Juliet was ——"

"What were they quarrelling about?" interrupted the Squire.

"Well, sir, it seemed to be about Mr. Scott—which of 'em had him for a sweetheart, and which of 'em hadn't. Mr. Johnny Ludlow ran up as I came in: perhaps he heard more than I did."

After that, there was nothing for it but to let the past scene come out; and Mrs. Cramp had the pleasure of being enlightened as to the rivalry which had been going on under her roof and the ill-feeling which had arisen out of it. Fred Scott, to do him justice, spoke up like a man, not denying the flirtation he had carried on, first with Juliet, next with Cherry, but he declared most positively that it had never been serious on any side.

The Squire wheeled round. "Just say what you mean by that, Mr. Frederick. What do you call serious?"

"I never said a word to either of them which could suggest serious intention, sir. I never hinted at such a thing as getting married."

"Now look here, young man," cried Mrs. Cramp, taking her handkerchief from her troubled face, "what right had you to do it? By what right did you play upon those young girls with your silly speeches and your flirting ways, if you meant nothing?—nothing to either of them?"

"I am sorry for it now, ma'am," said Scott, eating humble pie; "I wouldn't have done it for the world had I foreseen this. It

was just a bit of flirting, and nothing else. And neither of them ever thought it was anything else; they knew better; only they became snappish with one another."

"Did not think you meant marrying?" cried the Squire sarcastically, fixing Scott with his spectacles.

"Just so, sir. Why, how could I mean it?" went on Scott in his simple way. "I've no money, while my mother lives, to set up a wife or a house; she wouldn't let me. I joked and laughed with the two girls, and they joked and laughed back again. I don't care what they may have said between themselves—they *knew* there was nothing in it."

Scott was right, so far. All the world, including the Chandlers and poor Juliet, knew that Scott was no more likely to marry than the man in the moon.

"And you could stand by quietly last night when they were having, it seems, this bitter quarrel, and not stop it?" exclaimed Mrs. Cramp.

"They would not listen to me," returned Scott. "I went between them; spoke to one, spoke to the other; told them what they were quarrelling about was utter nonsense—and the more I said, the more they wrangled. Johnny Ludlow saw how it was; he came up at the end of it."

Cherry Dawson was sent for downstairs, and came in between Sally and Joan, limp and tearful, and shaking with fright. Mrs. Cramp questioned her.

"It was all done in fun," she said, with a sob. "Juliet and I teased one another. It was as much her fault as mine. Fred Scott needn't talk. I'm sure *I* don't want him. I've somebody waiting for me at Edgbaston, if I choose. Scott may go to York!"

"Suppose you mind your manners, young woman: you've done enough mischief in my house without forgetting *them*," reproved Mrs. Cramp. "I want to know when you last saw Juliet."

"We came in together after the quarrel. She ran up to her room; I joined the rest of you. As she did not come down to supper, I thought she had gone to bed. O-o-o-o-o!" shivered Cherry; "and she says she'll haunt me! I shall never dare to be alone in the dark again."

Mr. Fred Scott took his departure, glad no doubt to do it, carrying with him a hint from Mrs. Cramp that for the present his visits must cease, unless he should be required to give evidence at the inquest. As he went out, Mr. Paul and Tom Chandler came in together. Tom, strong in plain common-sense, could not at all understand it.

"Passion must have overbalanced her reason and driven her mad," he said, aside, to me. "The taunts of that Dawson girl did it, I reckon."

"Blighted love," said I.

"Moonshine," answered Tom Chandler. "Juliet, poor girl, had

gone in for too many flirtations to care much for Scott. As to that golden-haired one, *her* life is passed in nothing else; getting out of one love affair into another, month in, month out. Her brother Tim once told her so in my presence. No, Johnny, it is a terrible calamity, but I shall never understand how she came to do it as long as I live."

I was not sure that I should. Juliet was very practical; not one of your moaning, sighing, die-away sort of girls who lose their brains for love, like crazy Jane. It was a dreadful thing, whatever might have been the cause, and we were all sorry for Mrs. Cramp. Nothing had stirred us like this since the death of Oliver Preen.

Georgiana Chandler came flying over from Birmingham in a state of excitement. Cherry Dawson had gone then, or Georgie might have shaken her to pieces. When put up, Georgie had a temper of her own. Cherry had disappeared into the wilds of Devonshire, where her home was, and where she most devoutly hoped Juliet's ghost would not find its way.

"It is an awful thing to have taken place in your house, Aunt Mary Ann. And why unhappy, ill-fated Juliet should have—but I can't talk of it," broke off Georgie.

"I know that I am ashamed of its having happened here, Georgiana," assented Mrs. Cramp. "I am not alluding to the sad termination, but to that parcel of nonsense, the sweethearting."

"Clementina is more heartless than an owl over it," continued Georgie, making her remarks. "She says it serves Juliet right for her flirting folly, and she hopes Cherry will be haunted till her yellow curls turn grey."

The more they dragged, the less chance there seemed of finding Juliet. Nothing came up but eels. It was known that the eel pond had a hole or two in it which no drags could penetrate. Gloom settled down upon us all. Mrs. Cramp's healthy cheeks lost some of their redness. One day, calling at Crabb Cot, she privately told us that the trouble would lie upon her for ever. The best word Tod gave to it was—that he would go a day's march with peas in his shoes to see a certain lady hanging by her golden hair on a sour apple tree.

It was a bleak October evening. Jane Preen, in her old shawl and garden hat, was hurrying to Dame Sym's on an errand for her mother. The cold wind sighed and moaned in the trees, clouds flitted across the face of the crescent moon. It scarcely lighted up the little old church beyond the Triangle, and the graves in the churchyard beneath, Oliver's amidst them. Jane shivered, and ran into Mrs. Sym's.

Carrying back her parcel, she turned in at the garden gate and stood leaning over it for a few moments. Tears were coursing down

her cheeks. Life for a long time had seemed very hard to Jane; no hope anywhere.

The sound of quick footsteps broke upon her ear, and a gentleman came into view. She rather wondered who it was; whether anyone was coming to call on her father.

"Jane! Jane!"

With a faint cry, she fell into the arms opened to receive her—those of Valentine Chandler. He went away, a ne'er-do-well, three years ago, shattered in health, shaken in spirit; he had returned a healthy, hearty man, all his parts about him.

Yes, Valentine had turned over a new leaf from the moment he touched the Canadian shores. He had put his shoulder to the wheel in earnest, had persevered and prospered. And now he had a profitable farm of his own, and a pretty house upon it, all in readiness for Jane.

"We have heard from time to time that you were doing well," she said, with a sob of joy. "Oh, Valentine, how good it is! To have done it all yourself!"

"Not altogether myself, Jane," he answered. "I did my best, and God sent His blessing upon it."

Jane no longer felt the night cold, the wind bleak, or remembered that her mother was waiting for the parcel. They paced the old wilderness of a garden, arm locked within arm. There was something in the windy night to put them in mind of that other night: the night of their parting, when Valentine had sung his song of farewell, and bade her remember him though rolling ocean placed its bounds between them. They had been faithful to one another.

Seated on the bench, under the walnut tree, the very spot on which poor Oliver had sat after that rush home from his fatal visit to Mr. Paul's office at Islip, Jane ventured to say a word about Juliet, and, to her surprise, found that Valentine knew nothing.

"I have not heard any news yet, Jane," he said. "I came straight to you from the station. Presently I shall go back to astonish Aunt Mary Ann. Why? What about Juliet?"

Jane enlightened him by degrees, giving him one particular after another. Valentine listening in silence to the end.

"I don't believe it."

"Don't believe it!" exclaimed Jane.

"Not a syllable of it."

"But what do you mean? What don't you believe?"

"That Juliet threw herself into the pond. My dear, she is not the kind of girl to do it; she'd no more do such a thing than I should."

"Oh, Val! It is true the drags brought up nothing but eels; but——"

"Of course they didn't. There's nothing but eels there to bring."

"Then where can Juliet be?—what is the mystery?" dissented Jane. "What became of her?"

"That I don't know. Rely upon it, Janey, she is not there. She'd never jump into that cold pond. How long ago is this?"

"Nearly a month. Three weeks last Thursday."

"Ah," said Valentine. "Well, I'll see if I can get to the bottom of it."

Showing himself indoors to Mr. and Mrs. Preen for a few minutes, Valentine then made his way to Mrs. Cramp's, where he would stay. He knew his mother was away, and her house shut up. Mrs. Cramp, recovering from her surprise, told him he was welcome as the sun in harvest. She had been more grieved when Valentine went wrong than the world suspected.

Seated over the fire, in her comfortable parlour, after supper, Valentine told her his plans. He had come over for one month; could not leave his farm longer; just to shake hands with them all, and to take Jane Preen back with him. That discussed, Mrs. Cramp entered gingerly upon the sad news about Juliet—not having thought well to deluge him with it the moment he came in. Valentine refused to believe it—as he had refused with Jane.

"Bless the boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Cramp, staring. "What on earth makes him say such a thing?"

"Because I am sure of it, Aunt Mary Ann. Fancy strong-minded Juliet throwing herself into an eel pond! She is gadding about somewhere, deep already, I daresay, in another flirtation."

Mrs. Cramp, waiting to collect her scared senses, shook her head plaintively. "My dear," she said, "I don't pretend to know the fashion of things in the outlandish world in which you live, but over here it couldn't be. Once a girl has been drowned in a pond—whether eel, duck, or carp pond, what matters it?—she can't come to life again and go about flirting."

To us all Valentine was, as Mrs. Cramp had phrased it, more welcome than the sun in harvest, and was made much of. When a young fellow has been going to the bad, and has the resolution to pull up from it and to persevere, he should be honoured, cried the Squire—and we did our best to honour Val. For a week or two there was nothing but visiting everywhere. He was then going to Guernsey to see his mother, when she wrote to stop him, saying she was coming back to Crabb for his wedding.

And while Valentine was reading his mother's letter at the tea-table—for the Channel Islands letters always came in by the second post—Mrs. Cramp was opening one directed to her. Suddenly Valentine heard a gurgle—and next a moan. Looking up, he saw his aunt gasping for breath, her face an indescribable mixture of emotions.

"Why, Aunt Mary Ann," he cried; "are you ill?"

"If I'm not ill, I might be," retorted Mrs. Cramp. "Here's a letter from that wretched girl—that Juliet! She's not dead after all. She has been in Guernsey all this time."

Valentine paused a moment to take in the truth of the announcement, and then burst into laughter, deep and long. Mrs. Cramp handed him the letter.

"DEAR AUNT MARY ANN,—I hope you will forgive me! Georgie writes word that you have been in a way about me. I thought you'd be *sure* to guess it was only a trick. I did it to give a thorough fright to that wicked cat; you can't think how full of malice she is. I put on my old navy-blue serge and close winter bonnet, which no one would be likely to miss or remember, and carried the other things to the edge of the pond and left them there. While you were at supper I stole away, caught the last train at Crabb Junction, and surprised Clementina at Edgbaston. She promised to be secret—she hates that she-cat—and the next morning I started for Guernsey. Clementina did not tell Georgie till a week ago, after she heard that Valentine would not believe it, and then Georgie wrote to me and blew me up. I am enchanted to hear that the toad passes her nights in horrid fear of seeing my ghost, and that her yellow hair is turning blue; Georgie says it is.—Your ever affectionate and repentant niece, "JULIETTA.

"P.S.—I hope you will believe I am very sorry for paining you, dear Aunt Mary Ann. And I want to tell you that I think it likely I shall soon be married. An old gentleman out here who has a beautiful house and lots of money admires me very much. Please let Fred Scott know this."

And so, there it was—Julietta was in the land of the living and had never been out of it. And we had gone through our fright and pain unnecessarily, and the poor eels had been disturbed for nothing.

They were married at the little church at Duck Brook; no ceremony, hardly anybody invited to be at it. Mr. Preen gave Jane away. Tom Chandler and Emma were there, and Mrs. Jacob Chandler and Mrs. Cramp. Jane asked me to go—to see the last of her, she said. She wore a plain silk dress of a greyish colour, and a white straw bonnet with a little bit of orange blossom—which she took off before they started on their journey. For they went off at once to Liverpool—and would sail the next day for their new home.

And Valentine is always steady and prospering, and Jane says Canada is better than England and she wouldn't come back for the world.

And Juliet is married and lives in Guernsey, and drives about with her old husband in his handsome carriage and pair. But Mrs. Cramp has not forgiven her yet.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE PEOPLE IN THE STEEPLE.

By Paul Cushing.

FOR more years than I care to remember now, Christmas Day has been mainly associated with a curious bit of experience which, with your leave, courteous reader, I will now relate.

At the time I refer to I was Private Secretary to a rising statesman, whose talents and income I much admired. I am not a private secretary any longer. My chief went up, up, up splendidly in the world of political renown and honour, and I went up with him, by sheer dint of hanging on to his coat-tails, so to speak.

In my secretarial capacity I had knocked up a pretty close friendship with a young Member of the House whose seat, though not his constituency, was in Derbyshire. During the season I had met him and his bride, and his bride's sister, pretty frequently at different houses. Both the ladies were so sweet and fascinating that I felt in duty bound to fall in love with at least one of them. The bride's sister was a beautiful girl, well connected, with a noble nature and a handsome fortune. I, Dick Treherne, was poor; she, Dorothea Genet, was rich, and as full of charm as a well-tended flower-garden is of perfume. Therefore, when I got a note, early in December, from my friend Mr. Endymion Lennier, inviting me to spend some weeks with them at Pepyswick, I lost no time in accepting the invitation. I expected to meet Dorothea at Pepyswick Grange. In a few days I packed up my traps and went down to the wonderful county.

A right royal welcome awaited me from both host and hostess; a sweet smile, a blush, and a prettily-turned sentence from the divine Dorothea. That very night I began to lay siege to the noble castle of her heart.

I found Pepyswick Grange a huge cluster of chimneys, gables, dormer windows and balconies; built of grey stone, several centuries old, exceedingly quaint and picturesque, and touched with the singular charm of melancholy. The park was extensive, the prospect glorious, the country well-wooded and stocked with game and sweetly watered. The village, a secluded old-world spot, nestled among the big trees at the foot of the Grange.

About a quarter of a mile from the village, on the edge of a wood, stood the parish church, known locally as the Priory. It was a very venerable-looking structure of Norman date, with cruciform ground-plan, massive walls, stone roof, and a central tower of great beauty. The chief doorway was of little interest, but on the north side of the building was a small doorway wondrously rich in carved columns, bearing on their capitals a wealth of arch mouldings. The door itself, which apparently was never used, was worm-eaten, green with

mould, studded with big-headed nails, and enriched with an iron handle and a couple of immense hinges of rare design and workmanship.

Some little distance away was a wonderful yew tree, of great antiquity, with a huge bole and knotted roots and wide-spreading branches. It was the chief of a small tribe of like trees, fat, prosperous, sad-looking.

Without being much of a meditatist or a lover of tombs, I nevertheless found no little charm in the old churchyard. One spot in particular pleased me. It was a smooth and comfortable seat at the foot of a yew-tree, formed of the serpentine roots. Sitting there, well sheltered from the wind, I had a capital view of the tower and the northern doorway in front of me. To the left was a large wood, full of rich winter beauty, exceedingly pleasant to the eye; while on the right a few fields were visible through the trees, a couple of haystacks, and away up against the sky a stretch of distant rusty moorland.

Pipe in mouth, book in hand, blue sky overhead, no sound save the chatter of a sparrow or the cawing of a slowly-sailing rook, or the soft mysterious voices of the forest, I sat with my back against the tree and forgot, for many an hour, the politics of my chief and the divine Dorothea herself, and dreamed dreams, and saw visions, and was happy as an owl in an ivy bush.

I did not care to give away my retreat to the people at the Grange, for various small reasons. So I said nothing about the Priory in the way of conversation. Said Lennier, however, one day:

"Have you seen the church yet, Treherne?"

"Yes. A curious old place with a fine doorway on the north side."

"There is not a finer in the county. We are very proud of it, I can assure you."

"Where does it lead to, may I ask?"

"Oh it isn't used now at all; hasn't been for years. It led down to a vault under the chancel that was never used. It is bricked up now inside."

"How is that?"

"Well, I almost forget the story, to tell you the truth. I think it must be forty or fifty years since it occurred; but one day the old sexton paid a visit to the vault and found the body of a murdered man there. It made a great excitement at the time, I remember my father telling me."

"My stars, Lennier, that is quite interesting. Whose body was it?"

Lennier shook his head.

"Was the murderer ever found?"

"I think not. All I distinctly remember is, that there is a wide passage behind the door, and the Vicar had it bricked up right away. Of course there is a ghost on the scene now, and I believe it would take a heavy bribe to induce any villager to cross the churchyard at night, unless it should be one in his cups."

A cold, delicious shiver ran down my back as Lennier gave this touch of the supernatural.

"Is this ghost still to be seen?" I enquired, with a laugh.

"Ghosts are always to be seen by such as have eyes to see them. I have not those eyes!"

"Tell me, what kind of a ghost is it?"

"It is said to be the image of the murdered man, in mediæval costume, who was thought to be a foreigner. Though why his ghost should get itself up in garments of the middle ages, is more than I can tell."

Of course I did not believe in ghosts any more than did Lennier, but on the other hand I was not such a metaphysical prig as to turn away my eyes when a ghost happened to come round the corner.

I could extract nothing more from Lennier about the ghost. With a touch of good-natured contempt, he referred me to sundry old wives in the village. I dropped the subject as far as he was concerned, but I continued investigations on my own account. I sought out every old wife in Pepyswick, and, as my pocket was full of shillings, and it was known that I was staying at the Grange, I encountered little difficulty with the shy, suspicious and reserved natives.

I soon set the whole village talking of the ghost, much to the terror of the youngsters; but I learned very little of importance. A good many women, and some few men, had seen the ghost, and most of them agreed as to his "mediæval costume," as Lennier styled it. On other points, the evidence was conflicting. Some said he was tall, and others that he was short; this old dame protested he was straight as a dart, and walked with kingly step; while another was equally sure that he had a great hump on his back and walked with a slouch.

In those days I was almost a house-to-house visitor, and, had I carried a bundle of tracts with me, I might have done a good stroke of home-missionary work. I unearthed some odd characters, with now and then a genuine original. But the most interesting find of all was that of the Hermit of Pepyswick himself.

He looked a man of eighty years, with long white locks, and a flowing beard of the same venerable hue; he was bent nearly double, and walked with faltering steps, leaning heavily on a thick staff. His clothes were of uncertain antiquity; though there was nothing mean about them. Like their owner, they were oddly ancient and the worse for wear; but there was a dilapidated dignity about both clothes and man that lifted them quite above the commonplace, and touched them with an interest that was almost romantic.

The first time I saw him, he passed me in the village slowly, and with a grave inclination of his head. I was so struck with his appearance that I lifted my cap and bowed in silence, as one might salute a time-stricken war-chief. Indeed, as I turned round to look at him I had much the same feeling that I have when I see an old war-ship, a

time-honoured gun, a sword with a legend, or the torn and stained colours of a regiment. "A brave old relic, that; a man with a history," I murmured to myself.

I enquired of Lennier if he knew who he was. He laughed and said:

"I wondered how long you would be before you discovered him. He is one of our chief natural curiosities, and is known as the Hermit of Hollow Booth. He passes for a sort of White Magician or seer. The folk think a great deal of him about here!"

"What's his name?"

"That is more than I can tell. In Pepyswick he is the Hermit, pure and simple!"

"Is he a native?"

"Oh, no. I don't think he has been here more than fourteen or fifteen years. Nobody knows who he is, or where he came from."

"He looks a remarkable character. I wonder you haven't tried to find out something of his past history!"

Lennier shrugged his shoulders, and, lighting a cigar, answered:

"My dear Treherne, don't you know that the unknown is more fascinating than the known? If we knew all about our hermit, there would be no longer any mystery or romance attached to him. He would turn out plain John Smith, or ridiculous Plantagenet Smith. Whereas now he is of the lineage of Cagliostro, and the man with the iron mask. If you wish to be happy and wise, don't give way to the modern craze of hunting down every little mystery that crosses your path. I wouldn't explore the Hermit for anything."

"Well, tell me where he lives, and I will explore him for myself," I said, with a touch of impatience in my tone.

"All right, but—keep the result to yourself. I do not wish to be disillusioned. He lives in a dingle some distance in the wood on the far side of the Priory. The chances are, however, that you won't find him at home. He is often away, nobody knows where, for days together."

It was night when this talk took place, and I had the Hermit with me in my dreams till morning. After breakfast, I set out in a snow-storm without informing anyone where I was going.

My destination was the dingle in the wood called Hollow Booth. I did not care to ask Lennier for directions, but trusted to meeting some villager on the way, of whom I could enquire.

Perhaps the storm had something to do with it, but curiously enough I did not meet a soul. Left to my own resources, I made for the wood beside the church and took the first path I could find leading into it. I was soon at sea in a perfect network of paths, which crossed each other in every direction.

After wandering very much in a circle for some time, I struck an opening that looked more like a rabbit track than anything else, and followed it. Fortune favoured me; the track opened out as I proceeded, and in a short space of time I found myself in Hollow Booth.

It was a dip in the land, with about an acre of perfectly level ground at the bottom, surrounded by a steep declivity; steps cut in the earth on each side, and grass-sodded, rendered the descent easy.

I leaned against a tree, lighted my pipe, and took a good view of the place.

The snow had fallen but lightly here, and I could easily see that the plot of level ground was covered with grass. Along the opposite side was a streamlet that issued from a spring in the slope. At the far end were two great elms, and behind and under them, filling up one third of the level ground, were two enormous rocks standing in a line with each other, at a distance of about twelve feet apart.

Looking closely, I saw that the open space between them was covered with a good thatch roof; then I caught sight of a chimney and a thin streak of blue smoke curling up among the branches of the elms. Then I knew that I was looking at the dwelling-place of the White Magician.

It was with a curious sensation that I descended the steps and walked slowly towards the rocks.

Thirty feet away, and just as I was noticing that there was a wooden front to the house of rock, with a door and a window, I halted; for the Hermit himself suddenly issued from his den. Slamming the door behind him, he advanced a few steps, and shook his staff at me in an attitude of menace. He looked fierce and weird.

"Get you gone!" he cried hoarsely; but I stood my ground.

"What want you? Get you gone!" he repeated, with a threatening demonstration.

"I did not know you were such an old heathen, my friend, or I would have seen you at Timbuctoo before I had paid you a morning visit. Good-morning. I'll go and pay a visit to the King of the Cannibal Islands, who will cut you out in manners any day," I answered, turning on my heel.

The truth is, I thought the old fellow was a bit dangerous, and I had no ambition to have a cracked skull. I thought I heard him chuckle ere he called out, "Hey, stop there!"

I glanced back over my shoulder—he was coming after me! Should I run? Anyway, I am happy to say I did not run. I humoured him and faced round.

"What did you come here for, eh?" he demanded, striking his staff furiously on the ground.

A thousand answers flashed through my mind in a moment of time. What I actually said to him was: "*I came to discuss mummies with you!*"

As certain fish will rise like a flash to an artificial minnow on a trolling-line, so the Hermit seized upon my words with strange avidity.

"Mummies! What know you of mummies?" he demanded, with a quick change of manner.

"Now, the truth was, I knew precious little of those interesting fossils. At that time I had not even seen a genuine mummy, though I had seen several bogus ones. I began seriously to regret the wanton humour that had led me to introduce the subject. I thought it wiser, however, not to back down too quickly. So I answered:

"Not very much myself, but I have a friend with a craze on the subject. And having heard of your wisdom, venerable father, it struck me that you might be well posted and able to give me a point or two. I should like to take my brilliant friend down a peg or so."

"I fear you are a frivolous young man, given to trifling with great subjects. Though you don't look so," he added, giving me a long and keen glance with his large, melancholy grey eyes.

"Thank you," I answered with returning courage.

"Come with me," he said, and I followed him. The old fox—venerable father, I mean—conducted me, not into his den, which I much desired to see, but round one of the rocks, where there was a seat large enough for two hollowed out in the stone. He bade me sit down beside him, and I obeyed.

"You were right, young man, in thinking that I could tell you something about the great, the ancient and quite sacred art of embalming," said he. "What would you know?"

I felt floored, and tried hard to look grave and wise, meanwhile battering my brains to recollect some fact connected with ancient embalming on which to hang a question. Up from the deep seas of memory I hauled a solitary fact at last. It was a perfect god-send—nothing less than Cedar Oil! Clearing my throat, I said:

"I should like to know what amount of private commission a flourishing firm of Theban oil merchants, say of the Seventeenth Dynasty, would be likely to pay a priest-surgeon with a good practice for using their best quality of Cedar Oil?"

For some moments the Hermit made no answer, and I began to wonder if he was considering the neatest way of murdering me. At last, to my infinite relief, he looked up from the ground. "I like your question, young man," he said. "It exhibits an active imagination which is very valuable in historical research. Most antiquarians are without an atom of it. But I cannot answer you!"

Then he began a long and learned and most fantastical monologue on the art of mummification as practised among ancient and modern nations. He seemed to have the whole thing at his tongue's end, and rolled it off by the yard in a sort of chant. I listened as one in a dream, fascinated yet bewildered, as he intoned his tale of quaint and curious learning. He chanted Egypt, Greece, Rome, Dynasties innumerable, Memphis, Thebes, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Porphyry, Tacitus, Statius, Gannal, Ruysch, Champollion—Figeac, Hunter, the Peruvians, the Guanches, and goodness knows who and what besides.

At length he paused, and I thought the wonderful old man had run himself dry. I was framing in my mind a Cyclopean compliment equal to the occasion, when he broke out again, in a lower but more impassioned strain, as follows :

"There is no secret of the ancients that may not be surprised, no invention that may not be discovered, no lost art that may not be found. If they with their rude instruments did fine work, we with our delicate instruments may do finer. Shall I have travelled throughout the world, seeking everywhere and among all peoples, savage and civilised, for one little fact, and not have found it? Nay, but I found it waiting my arrival in America, in Africa and in Asia. The Memphite mummy grew black and brittle ; the Theban, yellow and ghastly ; the Peruvian, brown and hideous. None of these were of perfect art. With perfect art, the joints shall remain flexible, the flesh firm, the features as in life, unchanged, the colour of the face and body natural, as of one asleep. A thousand years shall be as one day to the sweet fresh mummy of perfect art. And of that art there is but one master in the whole world, and—I am he!"

A very pretty climax, I thought ; but I was uneasy. There was a ring in the Hermit's voice and glare in his eyes which I did not quite relish. They smacked of the delirious. Yet he was not mad, except in a monomaniacal sense ; but in that sense, I wrote him down mad as a March hare.

I lost no time in winding up the conversation, and bringing the interview to an end ; and when, a little later, I took my leave, it was with the determination never again to intrude upon the Hermit's privacy.

I remembered Lennier's injunction, and said nothing about my visit to Hollow Booth. With something of disappointment, not to say disgust, I put the White Magician out of my mind, and returned to the more fruitful subject of the ghost.

I flattered myself that I was the victim of no delusion on the subject, and could approach it with the method of science and in the spirit of philosophy. This sense of dignity and mental elevation was very sweet to me, especially on the first night when I stole out from the Grange, after the household had retired for the night, and took my lonely way to the churchyard.

I did this on two successive nights without learning anything, except perhaps the weakness of my nerves. Yet that I continued my vigils, notwithstanding some very singular sensations, is a note of evidence in favour of my moral courage.

The third night was frosty and moonless, but the sky was throbbing with innumerable stars ; the wind came and went in sharp gusts, making the branches creak, and breaking the weird silence with strange moanings and other notes of a dim and unhappy life. I sat in my favourite seat, enveloped in darkness, and, much more comfortable, my fur-lined coat.

I think I must have fallen asleep, for I suddenly started, and, looking instinctively towards the northern doorway, I saw something that made my heart stand still.

A tall, dark figure, with head-gear resembling a dunce's cap, was distinctly visible in the starlight close to the doorway. It stood for a moment, and then suddenly disappeared.

I sprang to my feet, and rushed across the intervening space to the doorway. I tried to open the door, but it would not yield; I examined the ground carefully, but found no trace of footmarks; I put my ear to the door and listened, but all was silent as death.

I went home and to bed.

The next night—such is the enchanting variability of our climate—was wet, cloudy, dark as a bog: fur-lined coat gave place to mackintosh. My favourite seat would have been as bad as a shower-bath, and the darkness of the night would have prevented my seeing so far as the doorway; so I chose a broad, flat tombstone resting on four stone pillars that was opposite the doorway, and, creeping under, lay at full length and waited.

I was anything but comfortable. The rain came down in torrents, and the water ran in rivulets under my body, to collect into a small lake immediately under my knees. I should have given up the thing as a bad job for that night, had I not recollected that wandering spirits were notoriously partial to the watery element.

I lay on, while the lake in the region of my knees gradually swelled itself into an inland sea. I was heaving the log with my forefinger, when a slight sound arrested my attention.

I peered into the darkness for some moments without seeing anything; then, a few feet from the doorway, there rose, as from out of the ground, a colossal figure in black. It moved to the doorway—I was positive I heard a noise like a click—and seemed to melt into the blackness of the door.

I crawled out, and made for the doorway. Of course, it was fastened. I spent some time doing a number of foolish things, until an owl began to hoot me, as I thought, in mockery.

It became a question what I should do next. Common-sense suggested bed by all means; but scientific curiosity urged me to stay on, if need be till day-dawn, in the vague hope of getting another and a better view of the mysterious figure.

I was decidedly averse to taking up my old position under the tombstone, and was at no little loss where to bestow myself. I finally settled upon a yew tree that grew close to the church, about ten or a dozen yards from the doorway, nearer the wood. In this I ensconced myself as comfortably as I could, and prepared to pass the remainder of the night there.

I had small hope of seeing the figure in black again that night. It was close upon two o'clock, and I had been tree'd considerably over an hour, with my eyes riveted upon the doorway. I was almost

afraid to blink, for fear of missing something. It had ceased raining, and a few stars were visible.

All at once, without the slightest audible noise, the sable, awesome figure was dimly visible, standing in front of the doorway.

Presently it moved to the wall of the church, a short distance from the door, and I saw it stretch out its hand, apparently to touch the wall. Then, to my horror, it moved forward in the direction of the tree in which I was concealed. Did it know I was there? Beads of cold sweat were upon my face; I clutched a stout branch with both hands. On stalked the figure, upright, gigantic in stature, wearing what looked like a black robe, with long pointed shoes, the ends of which were fastened to its girdle, and a great funnel cap upon its head. At the distance of a dozen feet or so, its footsteps were distinctly audible. Not firm and heavy as became its stature and gait, but soft and light as a young girl's careful tread. The figure passed the tree just on the edge of its dark shadow. I saw its face, and gave a great start.

It was the Hermit of Hollow Booth!

He passed on, and I watched him until he entered the wood and was lost to view.

When once he had disappeared, I found difficulty in believing that my eyes had not deceived me. What had become of his long white locks and beard; his tremulous gait, and stoop? Was all this part of the trick? What was his motive? What mystery lurked behind that old, worm-eaten door?

It was something to have found out that I was dealing with actual flesh and blood, and yet it complicated matters seriously. There was no knowing what tragedy was hidden behind this elaborate masquerade of eccentricity.

I determined, however, that I would find out. I debated with myself whether I should get Lennier to join me. I decided to go through as I had begun, single-handed.

Dropping to the ground, I made for the spot where I had seen the Hermit stretch out his hand, and my attention was attracted to a stone gargoyle, representing an open-mouthed demon.

As I gazed at the grinning monstrosity, a sinister and almost irreligious caricature of the human face divine, an exciting idea entered my mind. I stood on tip-toe and reached up, but I failed to reach the gargoyle by some inches. I looked about for something to stand on, and finally got a large stone from the side of the road. Mounting this, I was enabled to thrust my hand into the demon's mouth. There was a hollow in the lower jaw, and as my fingers slipped into this they touched something cold. My fingers clutched it. I did not wait to examine it, but bounded to the door. There was a soft click, and the door swung noiselessly open. I had found the key!

II.

It was the evening of Christmas Day, a red-letter day in my life; for that very morning I had pleaded my suit successfully with the divine Dorothea, and had won from her sweet lips a confession of her regard for me.

After dinner Lennier and I repaired to the smoking-room, where in the course of time we were joined by the ladies.

I do not remember how it came about, but the topic of conversation was ghosts, and eventually the proposition was made that we should each tell a story in turn. The divine Dorothea, a creature of excellent imagination and quaint fancy, led off with a blood-curdling narrative; an effort that reflected great credit on her inventive faculty, as she deluded us all into the belief that it was a "true tale." Doubtless it was, in an oblique sense.

Lennier followed next, and was in turn succeeded by his lady. It was getting late when my turn arrived.

"Now, Treherne, don't pile up the horrible too much. Remember, the ladies' nerves are not like your own—of steel," remarked Lennier; but the ladies protested that they would give anything to feel a genuine shiver of horror just for once.

"Well, I am not going to tell a story at all," I said, coolly. Then added: "But if you like, I will show you a ghost worth looking at."

"Hallo, what's up now?" enquired Lennier, with an uneasy laugh; while the ladies exclaimed, "Yes, yes, show us the ghost!"

"You will have to come with me to the Priory then; and we must not lose much time either," I said, looking at my watch.

"He is joking," remarked Mrs. Lennier, in a disappointed tone.

"Oh, Dick, you are not, are you?" cried the divine Dorothea, gently touching my arm with the tips of her fingers, and looking reproachfully into my eyes.

"Never more serious in my life. If you care to come, I will show you something worth seeing!"

"The mediæval monster of fifty years ago, eh?" sniffed Lennier, contemptuously.

"Yes; and something else too, if you care for it," I said, being quite superior to any amount of sceptical sarcasm.

Lennier made a brave fight against what he called "the madness of the thing;" but upon the spindle side there were dexterity and tact, and the result goes without saying.

At half past twelve, we were all four in the churchyard, crouching behind a couple of tomb-stones that stood side by side, in good view of the now famous doorway. The divine Dorothea and I had one of the stones to ourselves, and, as a series of observations had led me to conclude that the sable figure would not show himself till after one o'clock, I began to devote myself to making some silent experiments in the art of courtship.

I forgot the ghost altogether. It was a clear frosty night ; frosty, but gloriously warm—judging from my own temperature. Moreover, the divine Dorothea herself was some distance from the freezing point ; though I heard Lennier mutter something about "awfully cold."

Presently, by chance, I peered round the stone—there was the figure in black, coolly stalking away from us, and already nearing the margin of the wood !

"Look ! look ! be quick !"

They obeyed, following the direction of my finger. "Ho, ho, ho," they cried, in startled tones, as they gazed at the gigantic figure in the dim distance. When it had disappeared in the wood, I said :

"We almost lost him that time. We must have been asleep. We ought to have seen him come through the doorway. What do you think of him, Lennier ?"

"Think ? I've too much feeling to think. What on earth does it mean ?" he answered in a strange tone.

"It means that there are more things in heaven and earth, etc.," I replied, thinking that a pin thrust between the joints of his armour might do him good.

"So it seems ; but what do you make of it ?"

"We will discuss that at another time. I want to take you through the doorway yonder !"

"Is it wise ?" objected Lennier, and I noticed the ladies were ominously silent ; only the divine Dorothea clutched my arm nervously.

"Well, of course, if you are all afraid to go, there is nothing further to be done. We had better go back home," I said.

"Afraid ! I am perfectly ready and willing if the ladies are. Indeed, I think we may as well go through with it now we are here," rejoined Lennier.

The ladies put on a brave face and assented.

So out we stepped from our hiding-place and moved towards the door. I got the key from the mouth of the gargoyle, and opening the door, we all passed through. First closing the door, I brought out of my pocket, and lighted, a large wax taper ; then I put myself at the head of the party, and they followed me.

Turning to the left, we went along a narrow passage formed of the outer-wall and an interior wall of brick. At the end of the passage a large opening had been made through the brick wall ; through this we passed into a small, circular chamber and down a flight of stone steps into the vault under the chancel where the body of the murdered man had been found. I was drawing attention to this fact, when Lennier said :

"For goodness' sake, Treherne, shut up ! The sooner we are out of here the better !"

Thus admonished, I led the way to a corner of the vault where was a huge recess in the wall, black as night. The divine Dorothea started back.

"Don't be nervous; there are some steps in there. We are going to have a good climb. It leads up nearly to the top of the tower," I said, moving forward.

The stairway was spiral, unlighted by any window from top to bottom, and gave access to a large square room, the existence of which was unguessed by anyone in Pepyswick; I subsequently discovered the position of the room to be immediately above the belfry. The ascent was slow and tedious. I stood at the top of the steps holding the taper in my hand, while the ladies and Lennier passed me, and stood in a group on the threshold of the unlighted room.

I took a step forward into the room; and as I did so, a sudden whiff of air blew out the taper, leaving us all in total darkness.

The ladies gave a little scream; Lennier snorted nervously—I mean angrily. I am afraid I laughed.

"It's all right. I have plenty of matches, and will soon have a light. There is nothing in the room to be afraid of; only a couple of chairs, a table, a little camp bedstead, and a huge old coffer with a wonderful lock, which must have been put in when the room was built. Here, hold the candle, Lennier, while I strike a light."

"Better shut the door, I fancy," said Lennier, as our hands met in the darkness. This I did, and then I lit the taper, and taking hold of it, held it aloft.

For a couple of seconds there was complete silence; then there broke from each of us a cry of startled amazement.

On a small round table in the middle of the room were placed wines and fruits and cakes; and at the table sat a middle-aged lady of striking loveliness, arrayed in amber silk and laces, and decked with jewels.

We stood spell-bound, expecting every instant that she would raise her drooped eyelids and address us. But she sat there, motionless, as one lost in deep meditation. And as we gazed, slowly and simultaneously there crept over us a strange, cold horror. Her stillness was the stillness of death. And yet, since the world began, death never wore such a sweet look of life.

Then I remembered the Hermit's Mummy of Perfect Art!

I stepped forward and touched her lovely right hand, which rested upon the table. The flesh was soft as living flesh, and white and pink, but it was cold as stone. There was no longer any doubt; it was the Mummy of Perfect Art.

Turning to my companions, who were a great deal more corpse-like than the lady at the table, I said:

"This is a mummy; and I knew nothing of its existence, or I would never have ventured to bring you here. I had found out that the ghost of Pepyswick was none other than the Hermit of Hollow Booth, and that he passed much of his time here. Why he did so was a mystery to me, but I partly see through it now. He is, I know, a monomaniac on mummies, and he evidently spends his

time in company with this beautiful specimen of his art. I saw nothing of her when I was here a week ago; I fancy he must keep her in the old locker there. Though why she is out to-night, I don't understand. What do you think of it?" I said, addressing Lennier.

"I don't know," he answered, coming forward.

With him advanced the ladies, pale, trembling, yet curious. But the mummy was so life-like and so exceedingly lovely, that it was impossible to contemplate it closely without feeling something of admiration.

"Perhaps she was his wife," suggested the divine Dorothea, softly; and, somehow, the suggestion worked like a veil of tender sentiment, covering a grim eccentricity with the pathos of human passion and love.

In less than a year, the Hermit was suddenly missing from Hollow Booth, and Lennier made a confidential communication to the authorities. Upon search being made in the tower, the lifeless body of the Hermit was found lying beside that of the beautiful mummy. They were buried together in Pepyswick churchyard, and the secret of the tower never passed outside official circles. With the identification of the Hermit himself, a singular case of disappearance, which had baffled the police for years, was set at rest.

SPARED.

THE shadow of a presence dread
Has vanished from the room!
The terror of the night has fled,
Its anguish and its gloom.

The dove had spread its wings for flight,
But on a mother's breast
Are folded now those pinions white
In deep and thankful rest.

The flower that bent beneath the storm
Now lifts its head anew,
And love's own warmth enfolds its form
In sunshine and in dew.

And gladness fills the watchers wan
Who weary vigils shared—
The halls will ring with joy anon—
The little one is spared!

CLARA THWAITES.

THE MISSES LOWMAN.

IN these days, when interest and enquiry are directed towards abnormal mental phenomena, instead of the mere incredulity which most of us can remember so well, a new danger arises to beset any rational investigation into this fascinating field. We are apt to hear only those stories of prescient impression which are rounded off artistically, generally to an end of calamity or death. The consequence is that the healthier minds are repelled from the whole subject, and it is relegated to the gloomy and morbid. Others, wholesomely refusing "to meet trouble half way," strive to resist any impression that passes upon them, feeling only that it probably "bodes no good."

If anyone is inclined to question my statement, let him moot the matter of thought-reading, dreams, etc., in the first little neighbourly assembly in which he joins. If his friends know no more of mental phenomena than is to be gathered from newspapers, general conversation, etc., he will find they instantly divide into two parties. The dreamy, sickly and fanciful of the group are sure "there is something in it," and each will produce his little tale of foreboding or warning. The bright, healthy and practical will say "there is very little in it, and what there is is mere disease, to be repressed in silence and got rid of as soon as possible."

This is not the way in which unknown facts can be ever rightly weighed and correlated. If we leave the investigation of mental phenomena to weak, foreboding minds, it is only the mental phenomena of weakness and fear that can ever come to light.

It has often seemed to those who have looked with some care into the strange facts of insight and foresight which life occasionally throws up to the surface, that few are so interesting as those which remain inexplicable: the stories which have no artistic end: and which seem to reveal the existence of a law generally working in secret, but always operative, without any stimulus from fear, sorrow, love or emotional disturbance of any kind.

I think I will try to tell one such story now. It is an experience of my own girlhood. It is necessary, therefore, that I should strive to set myself and my surroundings before my reader.

I was the youngest of our family; and with many years intervening between myself and the sister next me in age, I was the constant companion of my eldest sister, a cheerful and intensely matter-of-fact person. My favoured friend in those days was a boy-cousin about two years my senior, and naturally at his then age, a very unromantic individual, who delivered his opinions and advice in an uncompromising, brotherly fashion.

It can be readily understood that in these circumstances, though I was not at all a solitary child, yet I had an interior life which was solitary. I was in the habit of weaving long stories in my own mind, which I carried on for days together, and whose outward expression was never in manuscript, but in strange caricature-like drawings which I did, in rows with lines between, after the style of Egyptian hieroglyphics.

My home was in the heart of London, in the centre of interests of every kind: historical, political, picturesque and tragic. Access to the country was not as easy then as now, and I saw very little of it, but always walked in the parks for two or three hours every day. I was never out of doors without an attendant of some kind, my eldest sister being my usual companion. I was never taken to the theatre, or indulged in late hours either of night or morning. I had plenty of interesting books of every kind; but the only "novel" proper which I had read was "The Heart of Midlothian," which I had found, without title-page or author's name, in the house of a relative's old servant, and of which I had eagerly devoured every word, quite undaunted even by the legal dryness of Mr. Saddletree.

I received my education at a morning school for girls. Education then was a simpler thing than it is now; but in organisation, discipline, etc., either that school must have been superior to its contemporaries, or the modern improvements on these lines need not be boasted of; for in them I have never seen it surpassed—scarcely equalled.

I got on well with all my teachers; was a great favourite with two of them. My pet subjects were drawing and history, and I gained many prizes. I generally had one favoured associate; but my school attachments never rose to the dignity of friendship; I fear I held them rather loosely. I was on good terms with all my school-fellows, but held a little aloof from them. We had not many interests in common. My home life was of a sterner pattern than most of theirs, and I cared little for the parties and the dressing in which they took delight. I was a little sharp-tempered and "difficult," inclined to take my own way, and to persist in it, perhaps not always pleasantly.

So much for myself and for the influence about me.

The house in which the school was held was within a few doors of my own home. It was a fine old mansion, which had belonged to very grand folk in the reign of Charles II., and more recently had been occupied by a fashionable club of the faster kind, where for purposes of gaming, duelling, and other illicit practices, sundry secret doors, false floors, etc., had been introduced into its construction. These days, however, had passed away long before my birth, and for years it had been a high class ladies' school, its wicked old contrivances left useless and innocent.

But its generally dignified arrangements remained useful. Its white stone staircase needed no carpet. Its well-separated rooms prevented any class, even a singing one, from disturbing its neighbours.

Its great entrance hall, with its three divisions, planned probably for the purpose of securing delay when desirable, was still specially useful. The first was a mere lobby, on to which the outer doors stood open during school hours. Glass doors gave admission to the second hall, which was furnished with forms for the convenience of servants waiting to escort their young ladies. The doors of the third, or inner hall, were kept clasped and guarded by the school-room maid, and it was furnished as a dressing-room, with looking glass, hanging pegs, etc.

I have dwelt on the description of the hall, because it is the scenery of this story of mine—which is no story at all, in its end.

Let me add that in those days school life was divided by "quarters," not "terms," and that new scholars were entered very rarely except at these quarters.

Well, I was about twelve years of age. It was the middle of a a quarter; I think about the end of October; a time at which there was no excitement about examinations, prizes, or school arrivals or partings. I had lived through my usual quiet, fully-occupied day, and had gone to bed at my regular hour. Then I had a dream.

I may pause here to say that all my life I have been what I may venture to call a rather rational dreamer. I have scarcely ever dreamed of horrors or of specially exciting events of any kind, but of life very much like that in which I have lived by day. I remember of these dreams seldom more than a generally pleasant impression. When I can recall farther, they are usually dramatically correct, and with humorous or poetic point, and somewhat to the purpose of my life at the time. I will not deny that I have been soothed and helped by dreams. But it is very seldom indeed that I can recall more than generally pleasant impressions.

On this occasion I dreamed that I was, as usual, walking to school—this was the only out-door excursion I ever made alone—the school being, as I have said, separated by only twelve or thirteen houses from my home. In front of me I saw two tall young girls, clad in the deepest mourning, and accompanied by an elderly gentleman also in deep mourning. (Note *that* detail.) Of the girls I noticed nothing but their specially sombre attire and somewhat lanky figures. But as I passed them the gentleman turned and spoke to me, and I saw that he had fine high features and a long grey beard. He continued speaking to me till we reached the school door. There the girls passed in silently, and as if quite unaware of the presence of the old gentleman or myself. I saw them walk through the second division, but we lingered in the outer lobby. He spoke with much emphasis and great gesticulation. Whether or not I seemed to him to respond I cannot say, but it was *as if I heard nothing.* The dream ended here; or at least as far as my memory was concerned. Whether I woke at this juncture or the dream faded off in mist, as dreams sometimes do, I cannot recall.

Next morning I went to school as usual, and going straight up into

the school-room saw, on seats facing the door, the two heroines of my dream: the tall, pale, sable-clad girls! It is odd that I can remember distinctly that I was not greatly surprised or impressed; the fact being that such "coincidences" as this were not uncommon to me at that time. I thought them "coincidences" and nothing more, and should never have dreamed of mentioning them to anyone but my eldest sister, who would have undoubtedly set them down as such.

If more had not followed, I should no doubt have forgotten all about this, though I turned the matter over in my mind, with a half laugh. "What a muddle these things are!" I thought. "Why did I dream about these girls and an old gentleman, and then encounter the girls, but no old gentleman? Where is he?"

We will call the girls the Misses Lowman (I do not give the right name). They and I sat in different divisions and were in separate classes, and there was no communication whatever between us, except a formal bow, if we chanced to meet out of school-hours in the street. So weeks passed by.

I was at that time receiving some special instruction in drawing, and as no other pupil happened to be attending the same class, I received my instruction alone at the end of a desk in the big school-room, the master bending over me, and the rest of the scholastic work going on as usual. Suddenly a teacher had occasion to call out in a very audible voice: "The Misses Lowman!"

My drawing master paused and looked round, as the two tall, black-robed girls walked up the school-room in obedience to this summons.

Then bending over me, he asked in a whisper:

"Do you know if those young ladies live in Bridge Street?"

"I do not know," I said; "but I have seen them once or twice walking in that direction."

"Do you know if they are in mourning for their father?" he enquired.

"I do not know," I replied again, this time with a little interest.

"I used to know a little of old Mr. Lowman of Bridge Street," he said, rather sadly. "I believe he died very suddenly. I think these must be his daughters: they have something of his look. I always thought he would have made a grand study: he was a fine-looking old man, with noble features and a long grey beard."

There was the old gentleman of my dream! If these were the Misses Lowman of Bridge Street, then in my sleep I had seen the dead father beside the living daughters.

A few well-directed questions asked of the school-room maid elicited that the young ladies did belong to the Bridge Street family, and were in mourning for their father.

At this point, when I have been telling my story (for I have often told it), my auditors have all exclaimed:

"And what did you do then?"

"What came of it?"

"Did you prove to be great friends—or bitter enemies?"

"Did your lives come into collision at any subsequent time?"

I have had to reply simply and categorically:

"All I did was to tell the incident to my eldest sister and a senior school-fellow. They did not as usual say it was 'a chance;' they said it was 'queer.'"

"Nothing came of it."

"To the best of my recollection, I never in all my life exchanged one word with the Misses Lowman."

"I do not know what became of them. I left school before they did, and never heard of them afterwards."

To another enquiry, whether my mysterious dream did not tend to attract me towards them, as to someone between whom and myself a hidden link existed, I must always answer: "No, I think it had a somewhat opposite effect. I rather shrank from them. Perhaps I should not have felt thus had I been otherwise attracted, but I was not. The Misses Lowman seemed cold and taciturn; the two sisters held much together and sought no acquaintance among their school-fellows."

And when I have answered all these questions, the next remark is:

"It's a pity something did not happen! The incident would work capitally into a story."

So it would. And of such stuff are stories made. But perhaps it is only fair that the public should sometimes see the raw material and learn to understand that the mysterious element which seems to surround our lives does not touch them only at their tragic points.

Their next temptation will be to smile at the apparently puerile and purposeless phenomena which will be, necessarily, often presented for their consideration. Let them remember, however, that while from the earliest ages the lightning flash had been known as an irresistible power of terror and destruction, it required a series of seemingly trivial observations on frogs, and minute experiments with Leyden jars, before electricity was recognised as a force capable of being a useful servant of human will, and a co-operator in human work.

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE.

'Tis Christmas Eve, and the snow is falling,
In fairy flakes to the frozen ground—
Like spirit voices the bells are calling,
A world of joy in their mellow sound!
Down in the heart of the busy city,
By the feeble light of one taper dim,
A voice to waken the sigh of pity
Is faintly singing a Christmas hymn.

No Christmas log on the hearth is burning,
Though winds blow chill and the hour is late—
But young eyes watch, with a wistful yearning,
A few red sparks in a narrow grate!
Through a mullioned window the moonlight stealing,
A halo sheds round one broken chair—
Where two young forms like cherubs kneeling,
Are softly lisping their evening prayer.

The mother sings while her babe is sleeping,
Although the chamber is bare and cold;
Above her treasure a fond watch keeping,
As "Mary" watched in the days of old.
She knows not why, but her heart rejoices,
Her life's dull burden hath grown so light,
And, oh, she hears in her children's voices
A ring of comfort and hope to-night.

"Poor mother's eyes have grown dim with sorrow,
Thou sweet Child Jesus," the children pray:
"The widow's home will be sad to-morrow—
Oh, send 'good tidings' for Christmas Day."
Ah, now that mother is sadly weeping,
But God hath answered the simple prayer,
For *someone* covered with snow is leaping
In eager haste up the creaking stair.

"Alas!" she sighs, while her tears are flowing,
"Can the dead return to this heart of mine?"
(On the narrow threshold a face is glowing,
Two brave blue eyes through the shadows shine)
"For evermore must my life be lonely,
Since he is lost whom I loved the best!"
The stranger pauses one moment only—
Then folds her close to his throbbing breast.

In loving accents her name is spoken,
In silent rapture she clasps his neck:
"Dear heart!" he whispers, "your last love token
Hath saved your Jack from the cruel wreck!"
He draws from his bosom, with deep emotion,
One silken lock of a baby's hair;
In calm and storm, on the briny ocean,
By day and night, hath it nestled there.

The light of joy in their sweet eyes gleaming,
In childish wonder the children stand—
Through the mullioned window the moonlight beaming,
Bathes in soft glory that happy band!
And now the father, each child caressing,
The wondrous tale of God's mercy tells:
And, while they listen, His loving blessing
Is wafted in on the Christmas bells.

FANNY FORRESTER.

ONE WOMAN'S LOVE.

THEY stood together in the gloaming by the miniature cascade near the end of the garden: a tall, dark-eyed, resolute-looking, handsome man of twenty-five or so, and beside him a small woman, clad in a dress of some soft, neutral tint, with a knot of crimson flowers on her bosom, and a trailing spray of the same velvety blooms in her hair. A small woman, and not pretty; at least there were few who would have called her so; though her eyes were of the clearest and deepest blue, and her brown hair was soft and abundant. The young man passed his hand over it with a caressing touch; and, looking into his eyes, you would know that the pale little face, perfectly colourless save for the fine scarlet curve of the lips, was to him the fairest and dearest face in all the world.

She nestled to his side when he put his arm about her, but neither of them spoke, though the same thought was in the mind of both; the thought that they might never again stand together thus and there—might never more meet on earth. For he, William Rutherford, must depart with his regiment that night. The Canoop County Rangers were to take the boat at midnight for Springfield, there to be mustered into the service, and armed and equipped, preparatory to entering the field.

Mr. Rutherford was first lieutenant of the company; a man whom nearly everyone liked. "So true and upright," people said; "so steady and firm of purpose; always succeeded in what he undertook." True and upright he certainly was. Firm and steady of purpose, too, with a quiet persistency of character that seemed to overcome or set aside all obstacles that chanced to arise in any course he saw fit to mark out for himself. Not at all a brilliant man in society, but courteous in his manners to everyone, and always a gentleman; yet more of a favourite with men than with women. A hard worker, a clear thinker, a man who could make the most of his opportunities; and, best of all, a tender son to the widowed mother whose counsellor and supporter he had been since early boyhood.

There were many in that quiet country neighbourhood—and a greater contrast cannot well lie between these unsophisticated, homely neighbourhoods of America and our artificial ones over here—who remembered how a pale-faced, delicate woman, clad in the deepest mourning, had come among them years before, bringing with her a little, dark-eyed boy. Her story was soon learnt. Her husband had been master and part owner of the fine ship *Caledonia*. But, one night of darkness and tempest, the good ship and her lion-hearted commander went down together in sight of the headlands of home. Another bitter tribute to the hungry sea.

"It is the widow of good Captain Rutherford," this simple-hearted little community of Canoop said to one another, and they welcomed her amongst them and strove to make her happy. Nearly all Captain Rutherford's property had been invested in his ship; very little was left for his tenderly-reared wife and petted boy. Pursuing the advice of friends, Mrs. Rutherford had come to this far-away inland place of Canoop, where provisions and houses were cheap and customs were primitive; there to make the best of her small income. She took upon lease a pretty house with a few acres of land attached to it; and here she lived and flourished.

Yet Canoop wondered how she did it; and dressed well though simply, and brought up her idolised boy as he should be—a well-educated man and a gentleman. But William repaid her amply for all her care. As soon as he came down from college he took the land under his own management, added some acres to it, was at work at it early and late and spared his mother trouble; and all things prospered with him. When he was twenty-one years of age he had saved enough money to purchase the house and the land, and it became their own.

In a little time from this William Rutherford had made the place beautiful. He planted a shrubbery, and made a small rose-garden, and trained the grape-vine over the walls of the house, and trimmed the dwarf-pines, and grew more cedars. All Canoop said it was a lovely little estate now, the most flourishing of all around.

So, when a family named Benson came from Ohio, and took on lease a place, large and rambling, near by, and settled down on it, they made more of the Rutherfords than of the other neighbours. Mr. Benson had been very well off, but he was an extravagant man, and spent more than he could afford. His wife sighed, and would remonstrate with him in private—uselessly. William Rutherford grew intimate at the Bensons'. He fell into the habit of riding and walking with the only daughter, Clare, a sweet, gentle, thoughtful girl, but not possessing any great beauty. The small world, looking on the intimacy of the young people, nodded to one another and laughed. Everyone felt pretty sure how it would end. Everyone, that is, but the suitor himself. He was not a vain man, and, as I have said, had always been more of a favourite with men than with women. No one, not even his mother, guessed what a hold this girl had gained on his heart; how her voice and smile, or the most careless touch of her dainty finger, thrilled him through and through. It was only the old, old story over again. The story that men and women have been learning from the day of Eden. You can guess what the end was in this case. Was it likely that the man who seemed always to succeed in what he undertook would fail now?

There ensued no open engagement between them, for William Rutherford did not consider his own position sufficiently assured to justify his speaking to Mr. Benson. He was again saving up money,

and had been ever since he bought the little farm, and he meant to take another for himself, perhaps to purchase one.

"I will go out, William," his mother said to him one day, seeing him in deep thought and divining what problem lay in his heart. "This is your own place, my dear, and it is right that you should occupy it. A little cottage will do for me."

William, looking at her in surprise, laughed the words off. "My place, did you say, mother, this? That it never has been, and never will be while you live. It was for you I bought it, and yours it will always be."

"But what about you and Clare, William? You will want a home."

"All very premature, that, mother mine," he answered, laughing again. "Time enough yet. We have life before us."

So he spoke not to Clare's parents; nor, indeed, much to Clare herself. But she knew that his whole love was hers, and in the deep happiness of his daily companionship, she would have asked no better than to wait for ever.

But troubles will come to destroy the sweetest dream. While many a remote place in the United States was living in as great security as Canoop, foreseeing no cloud likely to disturb its sleepy peace, there broke out that dreadful civil war between the North and the South. Upon some parts of America the news fell as a thunderbolt.

Numbers of young men, jealous for their own national honour, hurried forth in hot haste to join the army. John Benson was one, Mr. Benson's eldest son. The young fellow, sent to graduate for the bar, was at home just then on a visit; he lost not a moment in quitting Canoop, to enrol himself in the ranks. A little later Canoop itself formed a company; most of its younger men joined it. No enthusiasm takes hold of the mind or is so catching as a martial one.

It is said that "the world worships success;" and probably it was more for this reason than because he was liked, that the company chose William Rutherford as their First Lieutenant. As for himself, he liked that it should be so, for he had a good deal of ambition.

He did not guess what a powerful force in his nature ambition was; the one besetting sin against which he would have to contend from his cradle to his grave. A craving for place and power had always lain within him, restrained and held in check hitherto by a nice sense of justice and honour as well as by circumstances. But what if, in the years to come, some great and sudden temptation should be brought to bear upon him, would justice and honour maintain their ascendancy then, or would he do as many another has done, sell his birthright of truth for the poor reward of place and station? He was going out with the company as First Lieutenant, but he meant to rise to a higher rank, and higher yet, if fortune favoured him. And

this was the night of departure, and he had come to Mr. Benson's to bid his love farewell.

Twilight deepened: yet still the young soldier lingered, still his arm kept its place about the girl's waist. Their hearts were too full for speech. A whip-poor-will near by struck up its mournful cry, and the stars came out one by one.

William Rutherford looked up and saw them.

"It is time for me to go," he sighed, and led her slowly through the winding paths towards the garden gate. There they lingered again. It was so hard to part!

"Will my little girl often think of me when I am far away?"

He could feel her trembling in his embrace, but no tears came. She kept them back till he should have gone: for she did not want to dishearten him.

He kissed her fondly, holding her face to his. His tone was full of anguish.

"Clare!—won't you give me one kiss? just one! It may be the last—and the first—you will ever give me in this world."

She trembled more and more, with the nervousness born of feelings that are too sacred and deep for utterance: but, with her small hand lifted to touch his shoulder, she raised her face higher and gave the timid kiss. He answered it fervently.

"Good-bye, Clare! My little girl! My promised wife! May God bless and keep my darling for ever and for ever!"

And then the close embrace was relaxed, and he turned abruptly away.

She watched him until the last faint outline of his figure was lost among the deepening shadows. Then she walked slowly to the house and sat down upon one of the side benches of the large porch, shaded without by its vine tendrils. He was gone, and she was free to weep now if she listed.

Clare shivered. The night seemed to have grown chilly all at once. Rising, she fetched a shawl that hung just inside the house, wrapped it about her shoulders, and sat down again. Mrs. Benson, chancing to see her, said supper was ready; but Clare replied that she did not want any.

Mr. Rutherford found most of the men collected on the river bank, ready for their departure by the steamboat. It was a large crowd; and some of them had built a rousing fire—not that its warmth was needed, for the air was sultry and oppressive; but somehow the ruddy flame looked cheerful, and kept their spirits up. Many were there besides the young soldiers; relatives and friends who had come down to see them off. Here and there, standing timidly back with her bonnet drawn over her face, was a woman—a wife who had ventured down to see the very last of her husband, or a mother who would fain cling to her sons. There was a good deal of noise; some were laughing, joking and singing—most of it,

like the fire, got up for the occasion; but as the minutes went by and the steamboat became momentarily expected, they grew silent.

Mr. Rutherford glanced over the scene as he approached. He was in command. In its strong lights and shadows and picturesque grouping it was a scene for a painter; but he was not thinking of that just now. Suddenly, as his eyes wandered from one to another of the figures thrown into bold relief by the firelight, they rested on a boy of thirteen, whose face, lit up by the glare, bore a striking likeness to Clare Benson's. Seeing it, you would have guessed at once that he was her brother.

Lieutenant Rutherford laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "You here, George? I asked for you at home to bid you good-bye, and they could not find you."

"No. I knew mamma would make a fuss if I came; papa also perhaps if he knew it, so I slipped off and came down with Lyle Butler," replied the boy, looking up with laughing defiance.

They stood a moment looking thoughtfully about them; then George spoke:

"Mr. Rutherford, did you know that we have heard from Jack?"

"Yes."

"The letter came by the mail that got in to-day. But it's bad news. He means to go in for the war out and out; to fight to the end."

"Bad news, you call it, George! Your brother John wrote it as good news. He is a brave young patriot. You will feel the same when you are his age."

"I hope the fighting will be over long before that."

"So do I, lad."

Just then was heard a puffing, rushing sound in the direction of the bend, and all eyes were turned down the river. It was not a dark night. Two lights became suddenly visible, looking in the gloom like the flaming eyes of some gigantic monster, and the expectant crowd knew it for the steamer. Instantly all was confusion; hurried good-byes, the bustle of departure. Mr. Rutherford looked a little to his duty, issued an order or two, and then went around speaking farewell to one and another of the acquaintances he was leaving behind. He turned to George Benson last, holding the boy's hand in a long, close pressure, and his voice, as he spoke, was somewhat husky:

"Take care of Clare for me, George. If God spares me to get home again, I'm to be ——"

"I know," said the boy; "I guessed it ever so long ago. You are to be her husband."

"And your brother and John's. Good-bye, my boy, and take care of yourself."

The steamer went puffing on her way. A melancholy clock, striking the twelve strokes of midnight, seemed to be tolling the knell of the departing company.

There were many among them who never came back again. Over

the graves of some the grass grows green in the "dark and red ground" of Kentucky; some there are who sleep well beneath the pines of Tennessee; in many a spot they lie who went out that night.

"By Southern lake and stream they sleep,
On Southern plain and Southern steep,
And in the gloom of valleys deep."

Clare was still sitting in the porch when George got home. The boy's absence had been discovered, and his father, in much wrath, had gone forth in search of him, so that everyone was still up. He sat down for a moment by his sister.

"I went down to see them off, Clare. William Rutherford told me to take care of you. He told me something else, too—can you guess?" looking at her archly. "I'm so glad, Clare; there's no fellow I like half as much as I like him."

Something of the boy's overflowing hopefulness and delight communicated itself to Clare. Sitting there alone, the most gloomy fears had haunted her; fears, not for herself, but for her brother John far away, and for another who was going to face the same danger—that other who, though a stranger to her in blood, was nearer and dearer than the closest of kindred. Listening to George's lively talk, she felt as if half the load were lifted from her mind. She was glad that William had told him. It was good to have someone that she could speak to sometimes about what lay nearest her heart—and George was a safe confidant. So they sat there, the boy of thirteen and the girl of twenty, talking of the future that lay before them both—the future which would be so bright when the war was over and Jack and William left the army and came home for good.

Weeks and months went by. The Canoop Company had found the monotony and restraint of camp life irksome at first joining the army; but gradually it became more endurable, and they fell easily and naturally into the routine of military duty; and under the care of an efficient drillmaster grew, from a band of raw recruits, into a company of well-trained soldiers, intelligent, alert, fit for active service. Thus, when the order came for a southward movement, they were ready. There was a long and exhausting march through Kentucky in the rain and snow of early winter, when many of the men, utterly unused to such exposures, fell ill and were left in hospitals along the way; months were consumed in marching from place to place, with apparently no other object in view than to "harden" the troops; then came another move towards the front, then the opening of the spring campaign, with a battle or two, and the —th Illinois took its place among the fighting regiments of the West.

Among all those who from their far northern homes traced, so far as was practicable, the movements of the regiment, none watched with more intense, absorbing interest than Clare Benson.

In the letters that came home from the soldiers in the field were details of their new and strange life; some murmurs, many laughable incidents and odd scrapes and adventures, criticisms on the officers, some of them favourable, some unfavourable. There were a few grumblers in the company who complained of Lieutenant Rutherford. "He was too hard on his men," they said. "A martinet." A strict disciplinarian he certainly was; but no one, not even those most disposed to find fault, could say that he exacted aught but what was right or that he did not himself share in.

There was some gossip afloat in camp also, it appeared; and it found its way home, as a matter of course. Idle gossip about Mr. Rutherford's attentions to a pretty young widow, Mrs. Winchester, who owned a magnificent plantation and innumerable negroes in close proximity to their camp. Lyle Butler wrote all the tattle home to his mother and sister at Canoop: not exactly as though he believed there was anything in it, but laughingly.

Mrs. Winchester was sister to their colonel, Colonel Marsh, he said, who had established his own head-quarters at her house. Her husband had been a rebel (meaning a Southerner), but that was no reason why she should be one, and she was lavish in her favours to the men of her brother's command, furnishing them, through her servants, with a hundred things that they could not obtain elsewhere; and she gave most enchanting parties at her house, to which the officers were invited. "A *beautiful* woman, and rich enough to tempt a less worldly man than William Rutherford," concluded Lyle's letter.

The report did not trouble Clare. When people talked of it she only smiled. *She* knew who it was that William Rutherford loved; and who it was that, all things being well, he would come home to marry.

Again the time went on. There came more weeks and months of waiting, more suspense; but little news, certain or uncertain. The mails did not come regularly; and when they came, often brought no letters from the seat of war. One item of news Canoop did hear: that Lieutenant Rutherford had obtained a step in rank and gained his company.

Some little time before this, a rumour arose in Canoop that the Bensons were about to quit the place and settle upon some property they owned in a different State. It was quite true, Mrs. Benson said when questioned: her husband was already gone forward to see into his affairs there and to make things ready for them; and she with her daughter and George expected to follow in a week or two. But that was several weeks ago; the expected summons from Mr. Benson had not come, and no one could guess when it would.

July came in with its glowing skies and sultry heats; and one Saturday afternoon, when they heard that a mail was in, Clare put on

her bonnet, at her mother's desire, to walk to the post-office. "There may be a letter from your father," she said; "at least, there ought to be." Clare thought there might also be one for herself: it was several weeks now since she had heard from William. The regiment might be on the march, she supposed, or possibly there had been another battle. She walked slowly; the post-office lay two miles off, and the heat was intense.

"Nothing for you, Miss Benson," said the good-natured old postmaster, looking up from the letters he was sorting.

"Nothing for my mother?" she asked, not betraying her own disappointment.

"No, my dear, nothing. Here is one for Mrs. Rutherford, from her son, the captain."

"Shall I carry it to her?" said Clare, her face flushing. "I pass her house, you know."

"Do so, my dear. It's sure to be good news, as he writes himself."

Mrs. Rutherford looked up smiling when she saw Clare enter the gate, and came out to the garden to meet her.

"Come in, my dear, and sit down; you look hot and tired," drawing an easy-chair to the open window. "I see what you've brought for me, and it's very good of you; I was just going to send."

Mrs. Rutherford opened the letter and read it. It did not take long: there were but a few lines. She gave a little scream of dismay, and her face turned pale.

"Oh, William, William!"

Clare was frightened. "What is it, dear Mrs. Rutherford? Is he ill?"

"No, not that, my child. I cannot, cannot tell you. Read for yourself."

Clare did read, her face growing as white as the paper that rustled in her trembling fingers. Then she folded up the letter, and handed it back. Captain Rutherford was married!

The mother opened it again and read aloud the concluding lines as a woman dazed. "My wife insists upon my bringing her to see you, mother; so I have obtained a short leave of absence, and we hope to be with you in a week's time, say about the seventeenth."

"Is not the seventeenth to-day, Clare, child?" she said, helplessly.

"Yes," replied Clare, as she got up to go; and the two women looked steadily at each other. The truth was slowly forcing itself to the minds of both, that the idol they had worshipped was only one of clay.

"They'll travel by rail to the Denid Station, and come on thence by carriage," spoke Mrs. Rutherford, a sort of doubt on her troubled face. "Won't they, Clare?"

But at that moment there came a cloud of dust and a rattle of carriage wheels along the road. The carriage stopped, and Mrs. Rutherford started forward, the mother-love glowing in her faded

cheeks and brightening her eyes. Clare passed out by a side-door into a shaded path and so into the shrubbery; and from thence glanced out, unseen.

Yes, it was William. A little thinner and darker than when he went away, a little more grace—or perhaps one may say, fashion—in his movements; but voice and smile were unchanged, and he walked with the old kingly tread. By his side stood a lady in stylish travelling-dress, her plumed hat shading an arch, sparkling face. Thoughts of the old time came over Clare like a flood, and she shivered from head to foot.

Drawing her gauzy shawl closer about her, she got away, through circuitous paths, unseen, wandering away, as it were, to the wilderness.

The sun was setting. The dusk grew denser, but she found the way, and bore on; not hurrying—she felt as if it were hardly worth while to be in haste about anything now, and night had no terrors for one whose soul was groping in utter darkness on the borders of that land whose name is despair.

She came out into the open road at last. It was lighter here, and people passed her occasionally; acquaintances, most of them, who paused in careless, kindly country fashion for a word of friendly salutation. The little church, close by her own home, was lighted up for special evening service. A celebrated minister was announced to preach that night, and her mother had spoken of going to hear him. Clare did not go in. She went home.

The house was dark and silent when she reached it—they were all at church. She took off her bonnet and sat down in the porch.

She dropped her face in her hands and sat motionless. None but He to whom all hearts are open knew what bitterness was in the girl's soul. In the storm of grief that beat upon her, the anchor of Faith seemed giving way, and the waves of doubt and unbelief washed up to her feet. If he, whom she had so believed in, was false, what was there in earth or above it that she could trust? Suddenly a sound broke the stillness.

> "If distress befal you, painful though it be,
> Let not grief appal you, to your Saviour flee.
> He, ever near, your prayers will hear, and calm your perturbation,
> The waves of woe shall ne'er o'erflow the rock of your salvation."

The church doors and windows were thrown open that hot night, and the words of the old Puritan hymn floated out clear and distinct in the still air. Grand words—grand in their solemn meaning, and in the full sweep of the melody to which they were set. She listened, awed and thrilled, as if at a message from the "unseen land."

> "When earth's prospects fail you, let it not distress;
> Better comforts wait you, God will surely bless.
> To Jesus flee, your help He'll be, your Heavenly consolation,
> For griefs below can ne'er o'erthrow the rock of your salvation"

The moonlight, flickering through the tendrils of the vine, fell on her bowed head. The waves of doubt receded, the sure anchors of Faith and Trust took up their hold once more. That great sorrow still lay heavy at her heart, but it would not make shipwreck of her soul.

A sound of voices and footsteps in the road gave token that the service was over. She went to the gate and stood there waiting.

George ran up first. "Oh, Clare! William Rutherford is back!"

"I know it, dear."

"Have you seen him? Has he been here?"

"No, he has not been here."

"Norris says he saw a lady with him in the carriage. Who is she, I wonder?"

"She is his wife, George."

"His wife!" The boy fairly gasped. "Captain Rutherford isn't married!"

"Yes, he is married."

"Oh, Clare!"

A delicate hand, cold as ice, was laid over the lad's mouth, and he knew he must be silent. Silent now and always. Clare's face was in shadow, and he could not see its expression. George had not yet learned the lesson that comes to us all sooner or later in life, to suffer and be silent.

"Rutherford married! You don't seem to care, Clare."

The pale, tired face was turned wearily. "Not care! Little brother, you don't know ——"

"Yes, I do know," said the boy impetuously. "I wish John was here!"

"Hush, George. All that which you are thinking of passed long ago."

"And—was it quite over?"

Some sudden impulse made her draw the boy's head down to her and kiss him. "John is away, and you are all that I have left to love, George."

"I'll love you enough for him and for everyone. I do love you, Clare." Sincere, loving, brotherly words; but they could not appease the hunger of the weak human heart that still cried out with a voiceless cry through the silent watches of the night for *one* face and *one* voice.

Mrs. Benson talked pleasantly the next morning as she poured out the coffee of the unexpected return of Captain Rutherford and his bride. Some expression, fleeting and suppressed in a moment, in her daughter's face struck pain to her heart. Clare had not quite forgotten her old girlish love for the young man, she thought: but she had never considered him a sufficient match for her; things had turned out all for the best.

Ere breakfast was over, to their great surprise Mr. Benson walked

in, having just landed from the steamer. He appeared to have come, as was his wont, to settle down again, and did not revert to his project of removing elsewhere.

"Do you remember Ned Conway—that we used to know in Ohio?" he asked his wife.

"Yes, of course I do," she answered.

"I met him just now: he is staying down here for a bit; come to see some old aunt or other."

"I suppose he is very rich now?"

"Worth a million, I believe. He is a widower, and his little daughter, Jenny, has lately married."

How different all things looked this morning to Clare. The falsity of William Rutherford had brought to her that strange awakening of the heart to the world's bitterness which no other experience in life can give. The hope which had glorified all things outward and inward was gone for ever. Nothing upon earth could ever lure it back again. Even her own face looked unfamiliar to Clare as she stood before the little mirror, putting on her bonnet, before starting for church. A sweet, fair face it was, and the dainty white ribbons and drooping bluebells matched it to perfection. Mrs. Benson thought, wondering in the depths of her ambitious, motherly heart, whether this delicate blossom of hers might not suit Mr. Conway's fastidious taste.

As she was going in to church behind her mother, Clare, in shutting up her parasol, dropped her handkerchief. A gentleman picked it up. "I am afraid my little friend has forgotten me altogether," he said, as he restored it with a bow. Looking up, Clare met a pair of kindly grey eyes, and a pleasant smile that had certainly belonged in the old time to Mr. Conway. He held her hand an instant, speaking some pleasant words about being very glad to meet her again; then they all went in. He was a good-looking man of middle age.

The congregation were on their feet, for service was beginning, and Clare glided among them to her accustomed place, unconscious that a certain glance followed her eagerly. Looking across the church, later, she encountered the dark eyes of William Rutherford fixed full on her face. The blush that burned on her cheeks under that intent gaze was not the blush of love; the time for that had gone by. At least Clare told herself so.

When service was over, there were greetings outside as usual. Old Mrs. Rutherford was talking to Mrs. Benson and introducing her daughter-in-law. Clare's turn came: "Miss Benson, let me make you acquainted with my son's wife, Mrs. Rutherford."

Clare spoke some words of greeting, remembering that this lady was a stranger. "Not a bad or a heartless woman," she thought, looking up into the lovely face, all bloom and sparkle, that had come between her and happiness. The bitterness in this thought none knew but herself. Captain Rutherford, watching the meeting

from a little distance, saw only friendliness and good-will in Clare's reception of his bride. "She carries it off well—or else she didn't care for me as I thought," he said to himself resentfully; and he wondered whether it really was so easy for her to give him up. At the gate stood a large, beautiful carriage with fine grey horses, and two servants in attendance. It was Mr. Conway's, who was soliciting Mrs. Benson to take a little drive in it with him; he wished to take her to call on his old aunt. Captain Rutherford got out in time to see Mrs. Benson already seated in the carriage and Clare listening to a fine-looking stranger, who had his head bent talking to her. She turned as he passed close to her, and gave him her hand with a calm, polite "Welcome home, Captain Rutherford."

Was this all? Why, he had expected—he hardly knew what he had expected—but certainly not this. And he saw her placed in the carriage by her mother's side, the fine man taking his seat opposite to her, with some such feeling as Adam may have experienced when he saw the gates of Paradise close behind him, and realised that it was for ever. Years might come and go, and the garden he had kept and tended would bloom on in eternal verdure; but its beauty would never again gladden his sight. Not for him were the gales of balm, not for him would the roses blow.

Remorse and tenderness, love and regret, lay in the yearning look William Rutherford cast after Clare. His wife's bright beauty seemed dim to him beside the serene face and still composure of this girl, whom he had slighted in a way that a woman seldom forgives; whose heart he had won only to cast it aside when he found that his love for her stood in the way of his own worldly advancement; this girl who, putting aside their past as if it had never been, greeted him with cool friendliness and a certain fine reserve that made him feel, even while he stood close beside her, as if they were miles apart, as if she were by a thousand degrees his superior.

If she had betrayed any feeling at meeting him, he could have borne it better; anger, even contempt; anything but this quiet supreme indifference. William Rutherford had not married his wife for love, but for ambition. Her family were mighty; her brother, Colonel Marsh, had it in his power to advance his fortunes, or to keep him back: but if ever William Rutherford felt inclined to curse the demon which had misled him, it was now, while the reality of all that he had lost was there before him, taunting him with thoughts of what "might have been." And the sweetest dream of his life vanished utterly as Mr. Conway's carriage dashed off, and he caught a brief, fleeting glimpse of a small figure lying back among the cushions, and a delicate profile clearly outlined against the crimson lining.

Mrs. Benson went to call upon Captain and Mrs. Rutherford next day. Clare excused herself: she was not yet quite sure of being able to suppress her true feelings under the guise of a cool indifference. But that evening she met him. It was in the gloaming;

under the group of gloomy pine trees that lay back from the road between the two houses. They met face to face; and neither could affect to pass by without extreme rudeness. Clare felt as if she should faint; he grew white with agitation, even to his trembling lips.

"Clare!—Clare!—may I dare ask you to forgive me?" he said, putting out his hand.

"What else can I do?" she replied on impulse; for, as both felt, this was not the moment for attempts at make-believe. "I may forgive, but I cannot forget."

"Do you think I ceased to love you; do you think I could transfer to another the love I gave to you? Never, never, so long as the world shall last. The demon of ambition got hold of me," he went on in terrible excitement, "and I sacrificed to it love, honour, all I can ever hold dear in life."

"You might have spared me the pain of coming back here so soon; of bringing your wife to Canoop," she said, bitterly. "Did you think I was made of wood or stone?"

"And do you think I am made of heartless indifference!" he cried, piteously. "Clare, I did not mean to do it. Weeks and weeks ago I believed you had all left the place. News came out to us that your father had gone to settle elsewhere."

"It cannot be helped now," she sighed. "What is done is done; the past is irrevocable. I will wish you good-bye now."

"God bless you—my darling, I was about to say; but I have not the right to say it now. May God keep you, and pardon me. Do your best to forget and hate a miserable man, Clare, who feels ashamed of himself for a pitiful wretch every hour that he lives."

He wrung her hand with a passionate pressure, and went striding on. Clare stole back within the thicket and sat down on the stump of a tree. There she gave the reins for a few minutes to her misery, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"But I must not," she said, presently. "To continue to care for him would be a sin. I will strive to put him quite away, to forget him, as he says; and I hope God will help me to do so."

Within three months of that time Clare married Mr. Conway, and went away with him to the gay city near which lay his home.

II.

VERY fair and aristocratic Mrs. Conway looked amid her elegant surroundings—very fair and gracious was she, as the mistress of Mr. Conway's sumptuous house.

Six months a wife! She could hardly realise it as she sat before the grate on that spring morning, her pretty feet buried among the soft wool of an ottoman, her white hands toying idly with the silken

tassels of her morning robe. All about her was light and warmth and luxury; but just then she was not thinking of it. Her thoughts were back with a vine-covered house far away in the country; of summer winds blowing softly among the tree-tops, of apple trees gnarled and crooked, of a cascade that fell down miniature rocks in a crowded garden, and of the green meadows and the simplicity of the dear old life: the visible connecting link between that past time and the present being in the stalwart, bearded soldier at her side, John Benson. They were conversing in a low tone, not to disturb Mr. Conway, who sat at the table some distance behind them, writing letters.

"You don't know, Clare, how much I've wanted to see you, or how impossible it was to get a furlough until now."

She got up and put her two hands on his shoulder with an impulsive movement in her gladness at seeing him, going back easily and naturally to the old freedom of speech and action.

"You dear old Jack! I can hardly realise yet that you're actually with us at last. Are you sure you won't vanish into thin air, presently?"

He laughed. "Not much danger of that, I think."

"No, you look pretty substantial," with an admiring glance at his straight, powerful figure; for in outward appearance not less than in other qualities young Benson was "every inch a soldier."

Jack sat down. She took the ottoman at his feet, laying her white, braceletted arm across his knee. She had always liked to sit so, he remembered, when they were boy and girl together. But she had worn no jewelled ornaments on her wrist then. He took the small fingers into his own broad palm, turning the plain gold ring that encircled one of them round and round.

"It seems odd to see *you* wearing a wedding ring, Clare."

She smiled a little, but said nothing.

"Do you know, Clare," stroking her hair, "I used to think you had a girlish fancy for William Rutherford."

"Did you?" she gently said.

"Rutherford is a fine fellow; one of the best men I have ever known and the bravest," went on this unconscious brother. "A trifle too ambitious, maybe; but one can forgive that in a man who has so many good qualities. Such a splendid fighter as he is, too. You ought to see him in action, Clare. He does not get at all excited—just goes into it as coolly as if there were no such thing as failure possible. I don't believe he ever *thinks* of failure. Now and then the notion has crossed me that he does not value his own life. I'm sure anyone might think so to see the rebel bullets whistling thick about us, and he never flinching or letting the men flinch. And he is so gentle and cheery with them; so considerate for all their comforts when they are off duty."

Mrs. Conway's cheeks kindled at this. She had all a woman's

admiration for bravery. But the glow died out of her face in surprise at her brother's next words.

"His wife's death was a sad thing, was it not, Clare?"

"Whose wife? Whose death?"

"Captain Rutherford's. Did you not hear of it? She died about two months ago."

Clare's breath seemed to grow short.

"No, I never heard of it," she said. "How strange! What was the matter with her?"

"Fever, I believe. She had gone on a visit to her people in Baltimore, and her husband was not with her at her death, for it was rather sudden. And what do you think he has done, Clare? He is a proud man; too proud. His wife left the whole of her fortune to him, and he would not take it. He said he had not so much right to it as her own relatives, and he gave it back to them. Quixotic, was it not?"

"I don't know," said Clare.

"It was always said that he married Mrs. Winchester for her money; this disproves it," continued Lieutenant Benson. "I never thought so. He married her for promotion, nothing else; he thought Colonel Marsh, who had so much in his power, would push him on, once he was connected with him. But in that he was destined to be disappointed; for not long after his sister's marriage, the Colonel fell in battle. As you must have heard, Clare."

"Yes, Jack, I heard that."

"Rutherford was always the most independent man alive: he used to be when he was at home in the old days. But he is a good fellow, worth his weight in gold. He saved my life in the battle at Corinth at the deadly risk of his own. I knew who it was before I saw him. When he had got me away a little and I was able to speak, I tried to thank him. He smiled, and seemed to think nothing of it. 'All right, Jack,' he said; 'I will not let them kill you if I can help it.' I shall never forget it, Clare."

Clare would not forget it, either. In her mind, one such brave, generous deed cancelled a multitude of sins. Not that he was guilty of a multitude. All that she had known of him in the old time, all that Jack had told her of him since he entered the army, bore witness in his favour: all but the one fact of his treachery to herself. And as for his poor wife, Clare's heart went out kindly towards her; the beautiful woman who had been a friend to the poor soldiers when they were far away from home and kindred.

She had been picturing her as William Rutherford's wife and companion, when the snows of winter were drifting over her grave.

Remarking that he had "heaps to do," John Benson put his hat on, and went forth to show himself in the streets. Clare, on her way to quit the room, halted behind her husband and put her hand kindly on his shoulder.

"Have you nearly finished your letters, Edward?"

He turned to look upon her, and drew her hand within his. "Was it so, Clare?" he gently said.

"Was what so?" she asked.

"That you had a girlish fancy for William Rutherford?"

The question stirred her pulses; an odd thrill passed through her heart. But she answered him candidly, after a moment's pause:

"I think I had, dear. I thought, you see, that he had a fancy for me. It could not have been much of one, however, considering that he made haste to marry someone else. Could it, Edward?"

"I should say not. And what did you think, Clare, when he married that someone else?"

"I thought how lucky I had been to escape a man so fickle and faithless. A girl feels ashamed at having cared for a weathercock."

"Right, my love," said Mr. Conway. And he pressed her hand to his lips.

The next act in the life's drama was the sudden death of Mr. Conway.

As a Dives he had been clad in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day; but no Lazarus lay uncared for at his gate, no cry from the oppressed went up to Heaven against him. True and just to all, generous to those who needed, caring for the poor, there was little in Edward Conway's life that would not bear closest inspection. And Clare stood beside the velvet-draped coffin, in the darkened room, and looked down upon the dead face of him who had been to her a tender husband, a wise counsellor and true friend. In his affection she had found, if not happiness, at least peace; and that was much. And remembering all that he had been to her, she bent low and laid her cheek down in a mute and tender caress upon the clasped hands, cold and still now, that had ministered so untiringly to her every wish.

Clare had to give up her magnificent house, for it now belonged to Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Conway's daughter; as did also a great portion of his property. But Clare had more than enough; it was all as it should be, she thought: and a comfortable fortune was settled upon Mrs. Benson.

After some months given to arrangements, and to getting over the natural grief for the loss of a good husband, Clare went back to Canoop. Mr. and Mrs. Benson were really departing for a new home then. He was gone, and she was going as soon as she could leave her bed, for she had had a long illness. George was gone to college.

"I should like to buy the old home and settle down in it," thought Clare: "there's no other I should like so well." And she did so.

Walking slowly down the road one morning, the sunshine glinting

across the crape folds of her dress, she encountered Mrs. Rutherford, looking so worn and haggard that Clare enquired what was amiss.

"William is wounded," was the answer. "I have just had the news. He is lying at Nashville, and I must go to him. But oh, I don't know how I shall get there, all alone! I am now about to say good-bye to your mother, Clare; she will have left before I come back," added the old lady. So Clare turned back with her.

They found Mrs. Benson, still unable to leave her bed, in a state of great distress. A despatch had come to say that her son John was lying in the hospital at Nashville, dangerously wounded. "You must go to him, Clare," sobbed the poor mother; "I cannot."

"So you will not have to travel alone," said Clare to Mrs. Rutherford.

The journey accomplished, Nashville reached, Surgeon Moore received the two ladies. "Lieutenant Benson is better, nearly out of danger, I am glad to say," was his report to them; "but Captain Rutherford is very low."

They were lying in the same ward. Mrs. Rutherford, with a blanched face, bent over her son. His eyes were closed; he lay nearly lifeless.

"He makes no effort to get well," whispered the surgeon gravely to Clare, whom he at first took to be the captain's sister or cousin. "He is just like a man who has no longer any hope in life."

Clare drew near and stood beside the bed, looking down upon him who once had been all the world to her. What subtle magnetism was in her touch that his whole frame thrilled as her hand came in contact with his? The dark eyes flashed wide open, a great wave of colour leaped into his face.

"Is it my little girl? My promised wife? Come back to me after all this weary time?"

Clare stood silent and pale, unable to utter a sound. His little girl! His promised wife! The words touched her as she had thought nothing on earth could ever touch her again. And the bare walls of the hospital stretched away into a lovely landscape, and the carol of birds and the fragrance of lilacs were about her, and the same voice, *his* voice, was in her ear, and the words were, "my little girl, my promised wife."

The sweet dream lasted but a moment—then her thoughts came back to the present; to the long rows of beds with their poor, wounded occupants, to the anxious mother and the quiet, attentive doctor.

Looking down she met his glance, not listless now, but intense, eager. He put up his arm weakly and drew her down towards him.

"Will you ever forgive me?" he whispered.

"I forgave you long ago, William."

"Clare, you are good as heaven. And will you be my wife if I recover?"

She hesitated. She would have been more than mortal if the thought had not intruded of how he had once deserted her. But his eyes were pleading eloquently.

"I have never *loved* any woman but you in all my life, Clare. Promise me, my dear."

"Promise, young lady, if only just to appease him," breathed the surgeon warningly in her ear. "I will not answer for the consequences if he is crossed. Life or death may lie in it."

"I promise," whispered Clare, bending her head. And her face was so full of a solemn, tender joy, that the little surgeon thought involuntarily of "saints glorified."

He did not know how all that the woman's soul had unconsciously longed for through the first early months of weary waiting, through the succeeding anguish of keen disappointment and bitter loss, had met in this hour its full fruition. No one living had known that.

Clare established herself by Jack's bedside. He watched her with a feeling of intense satisfaction, thinking how nice and home-like it seemed to have her there.

"Why, you've grown to be actually beautiful, Clare!" he cried, with a brother's politeness.

She blushed a little and laughed—a low, pleasant laugh. The patient in the next bed heard it, and raised himself on his elbow to look at her, thinking, for he had an artist's eye, what a pretty picture she made standing there, where the lamplight fell in a flood over her shining hair, her animated face, and the sweeping folds of her soft grey dress.

In time the two soldiers were pronounced convalescent, and all the party travelled to Canoop together. Captain Rutherford pleaded with Clare to marry him in Nashville before they started: which was very unreasonable of him, and his mother scolded him soundly. But he felt still so uncertain of his happiness; he had a morbid fear of losing her.

George received his new brother-in-law elect very coolly. The slight once offered to his sister still rankled at the youth's heart, and the flame of resentment lit his cheek at sight of Captain Rutherford. So he made no pretence of cordiality, and did not take the hand the young officer held out.

"George, your sister has forgiven me. Cannot you do the same?"

The old, cordial friendliness in words and tone softened George a little. One glance at Clare's happy face, and the barriers of resentment were broken down.

"I suppose it's all right," said George. "Good luck to you both."

At the expiration of the twelvemonth after Mr. Conway's death there was a quiet wedding at Canoop. Mrs. Benson went then to join her husband, and Clare took possession of her own home.

Looking back upon the troubled past, William Rutherford could hardly believe in his present happiness. He recalled the days and weeks and months that succeeded to his ambitious marriage, and the loss of his wife, and the raging of war and battle, when he was at length struck down—all as one looks back upon some dreadful dream. And he had awoke one evening to find Clare's face, tender and pitiful, bending over him, and Clare's soft hand in his. It was all over now; the self-accusations, the bitter regrets, the remorse of those troubled days; only, sometimes, glancing down upon his wife's face, he wondered with a thrill of pain if she had suffered as deeply as he.

"Clare," he would say to her, "our history is like a fairy tale."

One evening they were sitting together in the porch. The moon, rising large and bright above the Jersey hills, shone upon them both, as it had shone upon her sitting there alone that long-past night in her misery. The little church was lighted up as it had been then; and presently a flood of melody came floating out towards them, wave after wave of sound, of the grand old hymn and the familiar homely words.

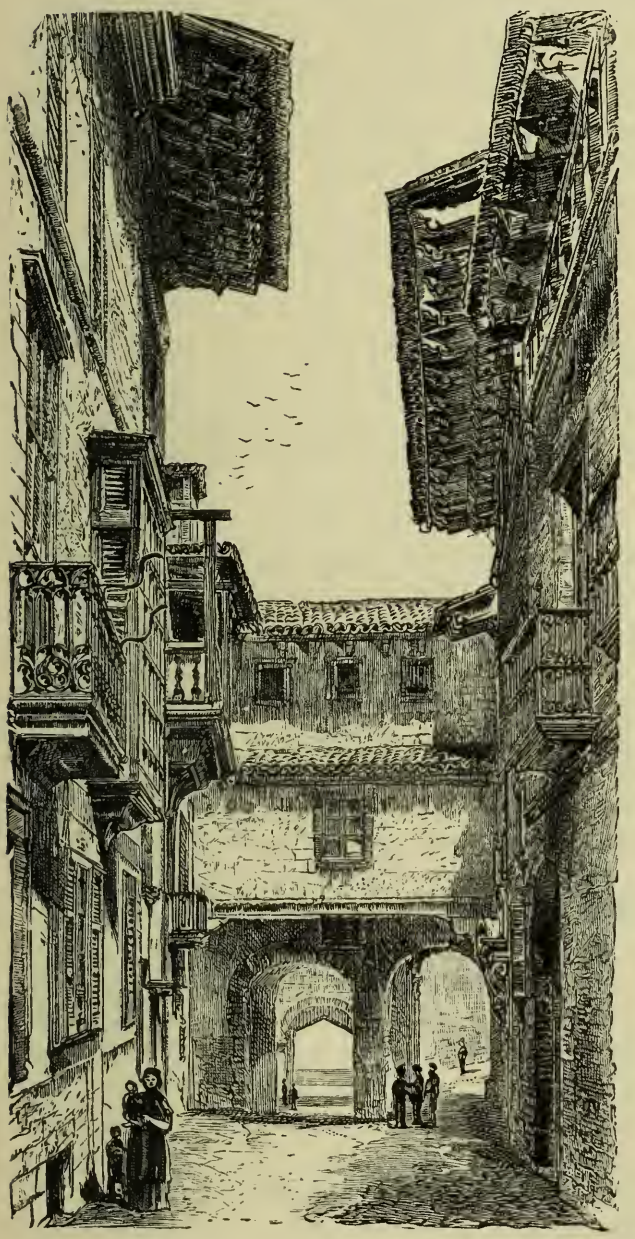
"Listen, William," she whispered, her heart strangely thrilling.

> "If distress befal you, painful though it be,
> Let not grief appal you, to your Saviour flee.
> He, ever near, your prayer will hear, and calm your perturbation,
> The waves of woe shall ne'er o'erflow the rock of your salvation."

When the last note had died away, and she nestled closer to her husband, he saw that she was crying. Very tenderly he put his arm round her as they sat on in silence in the moonlight. Clare could not speak; her heart was full. She was offering up a fervent thanksgiving to Him who had brought her safely through the troubled waters of the past; who had been in very deed and truth, the "Rock of her salvation."

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Under Northern Skies," etc., etc.



On the way to the Consulate.

Palma, June 5th, 1887.

My Dear E.—The days pass and bring their changes. These changes are small and slight, perhaps; they are changes of degree rather than of kind; but in this favoured little island of Mallorca, every change counts for a great deal.

I told you in my last letter that I had brought over one of Shew's detective cameras, from which we have derived infinite amusement. This has been A.'s special mission, whilst I have turned my attention to the larger and more serious machine. I think we have exhausted every street and nearly all the inhabitants of Palma.

Once it was a case of the biter bit; for whilst I was taking a photograph of the Lonja on the port, A. meanly took advantage of my head being in the focussing cloth to catch me and record me in this very ridiculous position. I send you the result, and beg you to admire the group of open-mouthed supporters by whom I am surrounded.

In point of numbers they are nothing. We have to pay the penalty of admiration, notoriety, celebrity, or whatever may be the sentiment we excite. Very frequently we are escorted by a tail of boys and girls half a street in length. We sometimes hish-sh-sh at them, and flap our arms, as one might at a flock of importunate geese; but these boys and girls are not geese, and we flap in vain. They look upon it, indeed, as part of the performance, and increase their forces.

The other morning we nearly came to a violent end. It was towards luncheon time, and we were making for our palace. We had had a very successful morning, and were returning with a dozen charming views in embryo—that is to say in an undeveloped state. One of these was the old Moorish Palace, of which I send you a specimen. We went into the great courtyard, and A., in his best Mallorcan and politest manner, asked permission to photograph the building. The sentry went off, an officer came out, was very civil, and gave us leave to do anything we liked. It is, perhaps, the most striking and interesting building in Palma; but, alas, has undergone repair and restoration, like the rest of its kind.

Next we took the view from the bottom of the Bourne; and you will observe the cathedral rising with singularly fine effect above the trees.

All the small fun over, our accompanying crowd of juveniles had dispersed to fresh fields and pastures new in search of excitement, and we were proceeding up a narrow street in the blessing of repose. A., indeed, was complaining of headache, of which you will hear more presently.

As we neared the corner, a karrawakky dashed round at full speed, right upon us. There was no pavement in the street, and absolutely no room for foot-passengers. If we had made ourselves flat as pancakes, still we should have been in more than jeopardy: and we were not ghosts to pass at discretion through bricks and mortar. The driver, however, was determined to make ghosts of us if possible. We were only heretical Englishmen, and therefore of neither use nor ornament to the world at large. This is the opinion of a good many of the Mallorcans: an opinion, perhaps, not confined to Mallorca only.

I fled backwards, and saved my life by diving into a beautiful old court. But it was humiliating to do this, and A. was determined not to be humiliated. He seized the horses, and, at the risk of his own life, stopped the thing in its mad career. The horses plunged, reared, and backed: A. never released his hold. He was pale with anger; the coachman was pale with fright. He thought his last moment had come, or at the very least that he would have to appear before a magistrate to answer for his crime.

You have heard of the pearls and diamonds that fell like a torrent from the mouth of the Beauty in the Wood, every time she opened that extraordinary and bewitching treasure box. You should have heard A.'s torrent of words. They were not pearls and diamonds, or

I would have enclosed you specimens for your gratification and adornment; specimens that, as it is, I feel bound to withhold from you.

Enough, that they were very strong words indeed; very much to the purpose. They blanched the cheek of the would-be assassin of a driver, who shook and trembled like the guilty and cowardly creature that he was.

I was charmed at the scene, which I surveyed with just one eye round the corner of the doorway, so that I ran no personal risk. It was delightful to come down upon one of these wretched karrawakky drivers with a vengeful torrent of strong words in his own language. It was a delicious sensation. I spurred A. on to greater deeds. "Down with him!" I cried, just putting my head a hair's breadth more out of the doorway. "Make an example of him. Shoot him, if necessary. It is in a good cause—defence of our lives." For, like Mr. Pickwick, I like to be very brave when not running any actual danger.

We spared the man's life; but I doubt if he will ever recover his fright, whilst I am quite certain that he will never again try to run over an Englishman.

When it was all over, and the carriage had gone on its wild career—wild no longer—I emerged from my humiliating position (though I hold that discretion is the better part of valour, and that in all dangers absence of body is better than presence of mind), and we went our way.

A. now laughed it off. If an Englishman singles himself out by any act of valour, or by doing the right thing at a critical moment, he always does laugh it off. A Frenchman will submit to be made a hero and to be carried round on the shoulders of the multitude; whilst a German will blow his own trumpet and canonise himself if an unappreciative world neglects to do it for him. But an Englishman is made of different material.

"Wretched man!" laughed A. as we went along. "We were as near done for as possible. These Mallorcans think no more of running down an Englishman than we do of shooting a rabbit. So glad I took it calmly and quietly," he continued, whilst I opened my eyes widely and wondered whether the shock had affected my brain. "So glad I didn't use strong language, or swear, or anything of that sort. I always like to take things calmly. Much better plan; don't you think so?"

By this time we had reached our palace, and I was spared the difficult task of replying to this extraordinary statement. The blacksmith was hammering away at his forge, and next door a sweet voice was singing "Che farò" with wonderful expression and pathos, whilst the singer's skilful fingers drew heart-stirring tones from the piano. All music sounds marvellously well in these old palaces. The rooms are so large, so slightly furnished, uncarpeted, undraped, that all the tones of which the instruments are capable come out with ringing effect.

Catalina is punctuality itself, and our Olympian feast awaited us. She had prepared a most dainty luncheon, concluded with delicious wild strawberries and orange juice. The latter we took in place of cream, which is not to be had any more than butter in this island of Mallorca; but I think we gain by the alternative.

I hope you will not think, from these occasional allusions to our cordon bleu, to nectar and ambrosia, and the delights of the table, that I am relaxing my hitherto severe indifference to these animal pleasures and indulgences; but in this hot and enervating climate life has to be supported. If we allowed ourselves to fall below a certain point, we should never recover lost ground. Death from syncope or martyrs to abstinence would have to be the melancholy record upon our untimely tombs.

A lady, by the way, informed H. C. on his return to England, that the reason cream and butter were not to be had in Mallorca, and milk was scarce, was because it was all made into cheeses. I doubted the statement; recalled to his mind that we had never heard of or seen Mallorcan cheeses in our wanderings; and that cows had been very few and far between. H. C., however, declared that as his friend was Spanish, she must be right. Just as if, in England, because the calendar marks Midsummer Day, it never happens that at that time we are often freezing and laid up with influenza.

So I made special enquiries on my arrival here, and sent word to H. C. that Mallorcan cheeses are unknown and do not exist.

I find him as obstinate as Galileo; and he replies, with an aggravation that I intend to embosom until my return, that he still believes in Mallorcan cheeses. But Galileo was Galileo, and H. C. is only a great poet; and Galileo was right, and H. C. is wrong. There is a great difference between right and wrong. Obstinacy in a good cause is only firmness, and may be martyrdom; but in a bad cause it has a name with which I will not shock your refined sensibilities.

I have told H. C. to come out and judge for himself, and I have no doubt that he will perversely write back and declare that I am in a tantalising mood. . . .

But I greatly miss my old Mallorcan companion. The very stones of the streets seem to cry out and ask why he, too, does not tread them with me.

Then he was so good in carrying the camera, and giving himself all the hard work. A. is very good, also, but believes in a division of labour. When it is time to go out, he cries "Come along!" takes up the elegant little tripod, leaving me the bulky remainder, and looks the while very magnanimous and self-sacrificing.

And, of course, he is so; for why should A., or anyone else, do my work for me, and carry my burdens? Even a light and elegant tripod is something. At least I suppose so, for I know that the remainder is a very great deal, at any rate, to my limited capacities.

I often think, with self-application, of an old Scotchwoman I met

in the Highlands last autumn. In the days of her youth she might have been one of those brawny wives who call out "Caller herrin'!" with far-reaching voices. She lived in a cottage that was only a butt and a ben by the roadside, and her old husband was keeping himself warm in the chimney corner, cowering over some peat embers. "He's just a puir body!" said she. "He's easily pressed down, but he's easily pulled up again." But I beg you will never say this of me, if I should ever reach that hoary age.

We are very happy in our old palace. There is a feeling of expanse in the rooms, and it takes us quite a long time to get round

ANOTHER "INSTANTANEOUS EFFECT."

them. A. receives deputations, which I much enjoy. They are not legal or political, but artistic and parochial. Two ladies called the other morning. They had bric-à-brac to sell: the head of Juno dug up from the ruins of ancient Carthage, the hand of Jupiter from the ruins of Pompeii. I thought they rather mixed up dates and countries and heathen mythologies, but I said nothing. They had also a pair of wonderful Majolica plates, and a piece of the veritable cedar-wood used in the building of Solomon's temple. One lady was young and beautiful, and I no longer wondered at A.'s large collection of antiquities. The other was fortunately ancient, and never could have been charming at any time; but she made an excellent duenna. A. praised and bought everything; out of a pure spirit of philanthropy, he explained to me; but if the elder lady had

come alone, my impression is that the pure spirit of philanthropy would have been nowhere.

No sooner were they dismissed than the parochial element entered in the shape of two Sisters of Mercy, who, of course, were equally successful in their mission. I do not wish to insinuate that Sisters of Mercy are subject to the infirmities of more ordinary mortals; yet they evidently much enjoyed their visit, thoroughly entered into the pleasures of conversation, and departed with reluctance. The ceremonious bows and curtsies that passed would have done honour to a reception at Court. I do not say that they embraced A. on taking leave, but I am quite sure they would have liked to do so.

My first Sunday was a great day here. A. placed before me a choice of amusements and occupations. It was an embarras de richesses. In Rome you must do as Rome does; this, I believe, has been a settled principle since the days of Romulus and Remus.

In Palma there is no English church: therefore I will not pretend to you that we went to church. In an island where the English colony consists of five people, four of whom will shortly have taken flight, an English church would fare badly. Of course, our English Consul might have service at the Consulate: might read prayers, and afterwards give us a sermon out of Baxter, or Robert Hall, or if he wished to be especially intellectual, from Robertson. I might even say that it is his duty to do this. But he does not do it: holds up no light to our darkened understandings. We have to find our sermons in stones. Running brooks are scarce in Mallorca, but stones are abundant. By the way, that was an excellent idea of the Scotchman, who said that Shakespeare had been misquoted, or had mixed himself up, and what he evidently meant to say was not that "there were sermons in stones, books in the running brooks," etc., but "sermons in books, stones in the running brooks, and good in everything." Comment on my part upon the old Scotchman's objection is unnecessary.

The greatness of the day alluded to consisted in its being one of the occasions on which the Bull-fights are given in Palma.

This exhibition takes place about twice a year in Mallorca; and I need not tell you that it is twice too much. A. placed before me this great temptation with due emphasis. To his regret—I could see he regretted it, though he was too polite to say so—I would not listen to the voice of the charmer. My feelings had once been harrowed at Granada, and I did not care to have them harrowed again.

Moreover, the Mallorcan Bull-fights, naturally, are not the best of their kind; and the more inferior they are, the greater their horrors and the danger to human life. Nevertheless, I begged A. not to think of me, but to go without me. I would remain quietly at home, shut up in our great palace, reflecting upon the vanities of existence, and reading my favourite Hervey's "Meditations among the Tombs;" a book I always fly to when I find my spirits are a little more elevated

than is consistent with the mutability of all things. A., however, would not go without me; a sacrifice to friendship and hospitality I could only appreciate.

It ended in our passing a very quiet afternoon, to which even you might have lent your countenance.

We went out for a short time and saw crowds of Mallorcans, dressed in their best, hurrying in all states and stages of excitement towards the Bull-ring. They seem to go mad upon these occasions. The sight of blood and cruelty, of danger and even death, appears to raise them to the height of enthusiasm and happiness. They rend the air with shouts, huzzas, bravos, at scenes that fill us with a sickening horror. If a toreador fails to please them by a due exhibition of skill, they would almost rend him asunder. If by chance he is killed, as not infrequently happens, their only feeling is that his life has been sacrificed in an excellent cause.

But I will not moralise about the Bull-fights. Fortunately it is autres peuples, autres mœurs. The Spaniards will have them; and if we have not Bull-fights at home, I daresay we have other abuses to set right if we could only go to work in the proper way to find them out.

We spent, I have said, our afternoon more worthily. Mr. and Mrs. Lee La Trobe Bateman drove down from Il Tereno and took afternoon tea with us, accompanied by Don Negro, to whom I must not fail to introduce you.

Don Negro is one of the most interesting inhabitants of Mallorca, as well as one of the best known—though he is only a dog. He is a privileged dog. Whilst all other dogs are commanded to be muzzled, Don Negro is allowed full liberty of mouth and bark. If he upsets half-a-dozen children, or frightens an old woman to death, or bites a piece out of an old man's leg who does not get out of his way quickly enough—it is only Don Negro, and whatever he does is right. He is a beautiful black dog, half retriever, half Newfoundland, with eyes full of intelligence, and a brain which understands all you say to him. He invariably rushes ahead of the carriage, and it is a matter of complete indifference to him that he stirs up clouds of dust from which you emerge at your journey's end choked, blinded and buried.

To-day he signalled his arrival by a feat of special intelligence.

There is a cat that lives—or lived—in the lower and unseen recesses of our palace: a hideous tortoiseshell animal with an unearthly voice, our great aversion. This cat happened to be taking the air in the doorway when Don Negro arrived. Cats are his lawful prey, or he thinks so, and it is the one thing on which he will not hear reason.

A chase began.

The cat scampered off for her hole. Away flew Don Negro with a bark that would have raised the dead, his tail in the air quite as

much as poor pussy's. He caught the unlucky grimalkin, and in the most playful and affectionate manner possible shook the life out of her.

Thus, you see, that though we would not go to the Bull-fight on this particular day, something of the kind came to us. Who is it says that there is an impish element in fate? There are times when it would seem so.

We passed a very pleasant afternoon with Mr. and Mrs. Bateman, and as Mr. Mark, our consul, joined us, the English colony found itself assembled under one roof. We drank tea out of cups without handles, and our lady visitor was far more charming than could ever have been Mrs. Thrale, whilst I hope we had no such old bear amongst us as Dr. Johnson could make himself on occasions. We sat out in our garden amidst the flowers and under the waving branches. To-day we had solitude. Our neighbours, including the fifty milliner young women, had all gone off to the Bull-fight, and A. for once was able to sit facing the windows. No cries of Catalina broke upon the startled air. The world around us was as quiet, the heavens above were as serene, as if that horrible spectacle were not going on within a short distance of us.

After the little colony had once more dispersed, each going his separate way, A. and I strolled through the quiet streets into the great and ever-lovely cathedral. To-day, indeed, it seemed to me lovelier than ever, for I saw it under new conditions. The westering summer sun shone in with all its power at the great west window, dyeing pillars and floor, chancel and organ with all the gorgeous tints and tones of the rainbow. It seemed a dream of Paradise. I had never seen the interior so light and brilliant; never had it looked so large and glorious. The whole building was deserted; we had it to ourselves, and, for a time, we wandered about in fairyland. Wandered and loitered, and marvelled at all the beauties of earth and heaven, until the sun went down and the rainbow dissolved and disappeared, and the immense interior returned to its dim religious light and to solitude.

A day or two after this we took our first excursion on land. We decided upon Andraix, as being a part of the island I had not yet seen.

Punctually at ten o'clock we heard the aristocratic rumble of the lordly barouche, and once again I found myself installed in its capacious dimensions. But it was hot weather now; the sun beat fiercely upon the earth; and A., who could not shake off his obstinate headache, found it necessary to have the hood up.

Away we rattled through the streets, A. with his detective camera, I with mine, ready for any emergency. We passed rapidly out of the town, raising clouds of dust as we went, without the aid of Don Negro. Palma is certainly the dustiest place in the world.

We rattled through the picturesque district of Santa Catalina, and swept round by Il Tereno, where the charming house of Mr. and Mrs. Lee Bateman stood out conspicuously under the shadows of Bellver Castle.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the views of sea and land as we went along. The island rounded in a succession of curves and bays. One headland after another opened out magnificently. It is one of the loveliest and most romantic scenes I have ever witnessed. The rich red earth and rocks stood out in warm, exquisite contrast with the green foliage that spread over the slopes. The sand upon the shore was dazzlingly pure and white; the water broke and plashed over it in soothing, gentle curves and ripples—water of the most startling transparency. Rave as you will about the Mediterranean, you can never exaggerate its charms. For many feet from the shore the colour was of the clearest, most exquisite aqua marine. There is nothing else like it in nature. Here and there a bit of sunken rock or seaweed threw a deep purple tone upon the surface. Still further off, in deeper depths, the green tone passed into that wonderful blue which must be seen before it can be realised.

DISTANT VIEW OF OUR PALACE.

Andraix is a simple, sleepy little town, beautifully situated, but without any very striking feature. The inn is very primitive; a room with a sanded floor, furnished with a few small tables, was its chief apartment. At one of the tables sat a group of men, playing some incomprehensible game with extraordinary and unintelligible cards. They were quiet enough, and received us without too much curiosity or demonstration: an argument in favour of the little town. It has a port, and a good deal of the population is composed of the fishing element; but the port is somewhat far off, and here betrays no sign of its existence.

Hardly anything to-day betrayed sign of existence. Andraix might have been a dead and buried city. The whole place seemed deserted. Whilst luncheon was preparing we explored. The little church on the hill invited our attention, and we toiled up to it in hot sunshine. There was nothing inside or out to repay us for our pilgrimage, except a charming view of the country, its surrounding hills beautiful in all their varied undulations. The town slept in the hollow and on the slopes: a group of many-coloured houses, with flat roofs; a long, straight, somewhat hilly street; picturesque nooks and gardens rich with creepers and blooms: exquisite spots to sketch or paint, but nothing more.

Our most interesting discovery was a wonderful palm tree, which can scarcely have its rival in the island. This we determined to photograph, and our landlord escorted us through the house to which the garden belonged.

In one of the rooms sat an old woman plaiting straw: the most singular old woman it has ever been my fortune to see. I think she must be the smallest old woman in the world. She had an eagle's face, looked altogether about the size of an eagle, and sat in a child's small chair. She seemed quite two hundred years old, and as we went through she took no more notice of us than if we had been invisible, or she a graven image She gave one quite a creepy, uncanny feeling. I wished A. had taken an instantaneous photograph of her, but I was glad to pass out into the garden, as from the presence of something that was not altogether human.

In the garden all was sunshine and healthy influence. The palm tree flourished and spread its feathery fronds, which swayed in the breeze and glinted in the sun. We set our camera, and nothing would please our landlord but he must also be taken, hat in hand. He seemed to think that by this means he should become immortalized. Then we went back to luncheon.

Our luncheon room was homely and interesting. The card party at the other end in no way interfered with our serenity. They were quiet enough; and presently, when a lady, carrying a prize baby, came in and joined them, their happiness seemed complete. It was no doubt their leisure time; between twelve and two o'clock of the day; though in this sleepy little town all hours and days seem given up to a holiday existence.

Beyond the room, a courtyard opened out, where a few brilliant plants flourished, and any number of cats went racing about in a mad career. From another doorway came sounds of frying and fizzing, and the ample form of our hostess might be seen superintending at a stove, looking as important and full of responsibility as if she had been mistress of all the skill and all the secrets of all the cooks that have been born (cooks are born just as much as poets) since the foundation of the world.

Save the mark! The good woman had grievously mistaken her

vocation, or else the cooking of Andraix is of a strange, mysterious order. Every dish that came before us seemed worse than the last. I thought I should have been poisoned, and I was certainly starved. All the sympathy I met with from A. was convulsions of laughter at my expressions of horror and disgust. We always, somehow, laugh at our friends' misfortunes when they are not deep and terrible. Fortunately our repast wound up with an unlimited supply of cherries: and so, for that day, I was content to fare, as our first parents fared in Eden, upon the fruits of the earth.

After this luncheon-fiasco, A., whose headache showed no signs of change (I began to fear this headache) rested quietly upon his oars, whilst I went forth again to revel in the glowing sunshine and the blue sky. There was a splendid seat on a mound near the church, and there I threw myself at full length upon the grass and surveyed nature.

It was a glorious scene. The little town is very favoured. Hills rose far and wide in every direction and in rich luxuriance. Fields of grain, almost ready for the sickle, were yellowing in the sunshine; olive orchards, whose time of fruit-bearing had not yet come, abounded. Not far off was the melancholy little cemetery with its sad cypresses, all enclosed in high white walls, that are themselves receptacles for the dead in the form of catacombs. The church itself was closed, but at any time it seemed as if in this sleepy little town no worshippers would be forthcoming to disturb its infinite repose.

I lay dreaming so long upon my exalted mound—out of the world in mind as much as in body—that I forgot all about time and circumstance, the end of all things, the chances and changes of life. What else could be expected of one who had fared to-day as they fared in Eden six thousand years ago? Was it not fitting that a more ethereal and spiritual frame of thought should take the place of one's ordinary and earthly nature? Sunshine and warmth and deep blue skies were intoxicating, for there undoubtedly is an intoxication not born of the stirrup or any other cup. When it comes to us we must make the most of it. It vanishes all too soon, and we pass out of Paradise, and feel like the Peri when the gates were closed against her. And then there must come a day when the sere and yellow leaf will put an end to all intoxication born of the senses; when the radiancy of youth, and the glow of imagination, and the bliss of feeling the world before one, must yield to the inevitable march of time.

Presently I was brought back to earth by observing a figure quietly toiling up the hill, and it gradually dawned upon me that it was A. in search of the truant. I hastened down to meet him.

"I began to be alarmed," he laughed. "Thought you had strayed into a world beyond. The lordly barouche awaits our pleasure."

We were soon on the road, bowling this time towards the port, which I wanted to see. It was out of our way, but time, as the advertisements say, was no object to us.

On this charming bit of new road we passed many of the curious

wells of the island, which are as ancient-looking and as picturesque as anything to be found in Mallorca. Fields of abundant wheat contrasted with the green hills beyond them. Reapers, men and women, were cutting down the corn, singing the wild music of the island. The men had hung their garments upon the trees, where they looked like so many forms under execution. The women, bare-footed and bare-legged, had taken off their shoes and stowed them away, whilst their stockings adorned their arms and hands—looking very much like the long gloves that ladies wear in England; and they were about as graceful in their effect. It was quite funny to see them. I wonder if stockings are ever put to such uses in any other part of the world?

The sea presently opened up, blue and shimmering, and lovely beyond a dream. A calm haven, running far up into the land, was sheltered by a basin of rich, green, undulating hills. Few vessels were visible. It is not a port for any great amount of commerce, with quays and piers, but chiefly for small fishing-boats belonging to the inhabitants of Andraix. At least such was my impression, and to-day it seemed as if even fishing-boats were few in number, for very few were visible.

It was a delightful panorama; one of those quiet scenes that fall soothingly upon the spirit, and linger long in the memory. Near the edge of the water where we went down, men were busy at a mill, cutting and planing wood, whilst their long saws sent forth a swishing sound, and scattered the scented sawdust around. A little dog left her litter of puppies, and barked away at us, and evidently considered our appearance an intrusion; but when a great black cat appeared on the scene, with a note of interrogation plainly visible in her yellow eyes and erect tail, the cowardly little dog scampered back to her basket and became invisible.

We soon followed this good example, and turned our faces homewards. The shadows were beginning to lengthen when we entered the now very familiar streets of Palma.

The next day we went to Banalbufar—a longer, more serious, still lovelier excursion. It lies to the north of the island, and its northern part is not only the most favoured of Mallorca, as I have before told you, but one of the most beautiful spots in the whole world.

A.'s headache still continued, and he was beginning to look really ill. I begged him to put off our excursion, but he declared that he should be better out in the open-air than shut up in the old Palace, or lying down with nothing to contemplate but the black effigies of Cleopatra the First and Cleopatra the Second. So when the barouche arrived, we started.

This time we were not to be starved. A huge hamper had been packed by Catalina, and was in the safe keeping of James, who, perched up on the box beside the driver, had much the best of it as far as seeing the country was concerned. For ourselves, buried in

On the Bourne.

our hood, what we could not see, we imagined. A. was unable to stand the sunshine.

The country was clothed in all the richness of summer. Hills rose on our right, given up to olive-yards and vineyards, and abundance of almond trees. It is one of the most fertile districts of this wonderfully fertile island, and from Banalbufar itself comes the best wine of the country. On our right was a stream, now pretty-well dried up. We passed a village nestling under the hill, whose gray houses made it look a thousand years old. Then a turn in the road led up into the mountains.

It was a long, steep drive, and the horses took it leisurely. This we did not mind, for nothing could be lovelier and more romantic than our present surroundings. But for A.'s constant headache, about which I began to have serious though silent fears, our happiness would have been complete.

As we neared Banalbufar, and began a steep descent, the glorious panorama of sea and land lay stretched before us. To our right was the coast of Miramar, the Archduke's territory; and there, reposing in the blue waters, was the lion-like rock on which H. C. and I had nearly come to grief one certain long-passed happy Sunday. I grew melancholy in its contemplation; but, "what has been has been, and none can take it from us." There is some consolation as well as sadness in that incontrovertible fact.

I cannot describe to you with what emotions I once more saw this wonderful coast. We bowled along, the sea far down on our right. Before us lay the village or small town of Banalbufar, and we were soon clattering through its long quiet street. No town in Mallorca is so romantically situated, reposing as it does amongst hills and rocks which stretch far above and below it, for ever in sight and sound of this matchless, ever-surging sea.

Terrace after terrace, slope after slope, is given up to the cultivation of the vine. Nevertheless, the coast is well wooded. Great fir trees are everywhere around, and you may cast yourself into their shady depths on a hot midsummer day and find rest and peace unto your spirit.

Before the open doorways of the houses, nets were hung up, as a protection against mosquitoes possibly, without at the same time excluding the air. But it gave the place a curious look, as of a fishing village taking holiday, and spreading its nets to dry. The women, too, sitting or standing behind them, and peering out at the passing cavalcade, spinning, or idling away the hours, looked like Eastern women of the harem, to whom it was forbidden to show their faces more openly. For they never came out to look after us, and the nets were not pushed aside. Of course this was a mere fancy. The women are no doubt as free to come and go as the birds of the air.

About a mile beyond the village we reached a shaded and romantic

spot where A. had decided that we should bivouac. Here our luncheon was spread on the hill-side, under the trees, away from the world and every vestige of mankind. True, we could see the houses of Banalbufar in the distance, but they were far enough off to be dream houses, or Spanish castles born of imagination. Just below us was a large stone trough, some four yards square, full of sparkling water, fed by an unseen spring, and near this our coachman put up his carriage and stabled his horses.

Below us, on the other side of the road, the slopes running far down to the sea were laid out in terraces, where vines grew in rich abundance. Can you imagine a lovelier scene? Scarcely a beauty of nature seemed wanting. We had it, too, absolutely to ourselves, and this was not one of the least of its charms.

So the moments passed, and with them our Olympian feast; and then I declared that I should stroll down the road and see more of the coast, and A., whose condition seemed to grow rather worse than better, thought a siesta under the trees would, perhaps, do him more good than a walk in the hot sunshine. We parted, and I went my way.

The sun was indeed intensely hot, and presently I threw myself down upon the steep slopes, revelled in a view that I have scarcely ever seen equalled, and plunged into reveries. At last I fell into actual dreamland.

From this I awoke with a horrible sensation of falling, falling down a precipice, only to find it a reality, and myself slipping down the rocks towards the sea. A kindly shrub, at which I clutched as a drowning man is said to catch at a straw, stopped my progress, or it is probable that I should not now be here to write this letter to you. I now found that our allotted time was up, and, with a mental resolve never to sleep again on the edge of a precipice, I turned back in search of A.

I discovered him just where I had left him, none the better for his siesta, but, I thought, decidedly the worse. James had packed up again, and then, having nothing to do, and finding time pass slowly, had set to work and carved all our initials upon a tree, mine largest and most prominent of all. So certain is it that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." There the record will remain till the crack of doom, or at least until the tree falls, and in falling finds its own doom.

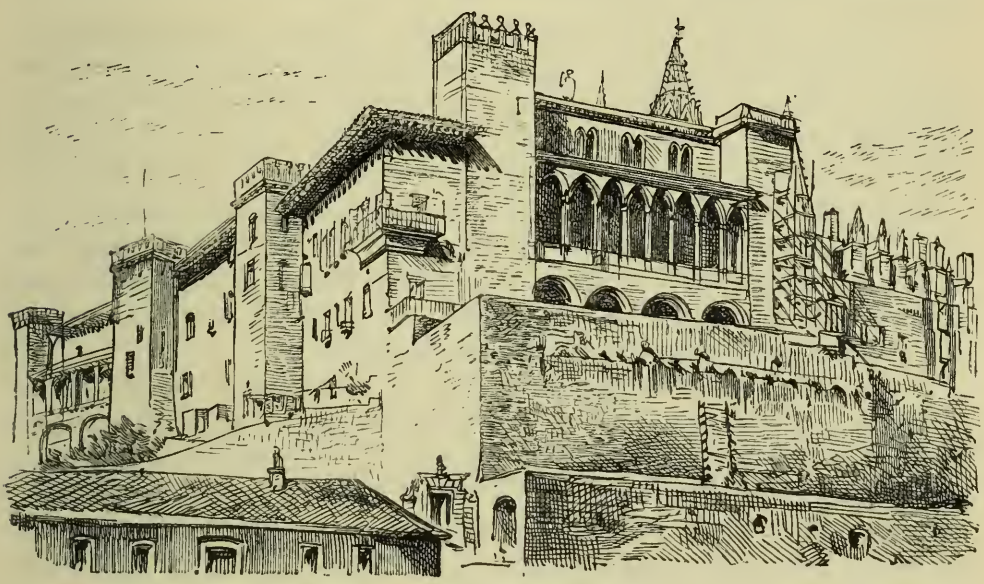
I will not trouble you with any detail of our homeward drive. A. seemed thoroughly done up. Under the circumstances, it was very difficult to revel in the scenes through which we travelled, and certainly it is impossible to rave about them.

So the days have passed, and another Sunday has come round.

This, my second Sunday in Palma, has been spent very differently from my first; but even in our quiet Palma de Mallorca, the days do not always resemble each other.

Yesterday A. seemed so ill that I felt something must be done. I tried to persuade him to see a doctor. I have not very great faith in these Spanish-Mallorcan doctors, but there are times when we have to make the best of circumstances. A., however, would not hear of anything of the sort. It was only a headache, and would pass off. Mr. Bateman came down from Il Tereno, and joined his persuasions to mine. He proposed that A. should go up to Il Tereno to be nursed; there the air was fresh and the views were lovely. But still A. was obdurate. When a man won't, he won't, quite as much as a woman. The utmost he would promise was that if he was no better on the morrow we might then send for a doctor.

The morrow was to-day. This morning saw no change for the



OLD MOORISH PALACE.

better. A. at last gave in, admitted that something must be wrong, agreed to have advice. In came Mr. Mark, full of concern. He has had no experience in illness, and, like many of us under similar circumstances, quickly grows alarmed.

"This is severe sunstroke," he confided to me. "I have told him over and over again that he would have it, and now my words have come true."

"I have an idea that it will prove something worse than sunstroke," I returned. "But he is really a very refractory patient. I begged him not to take his cold bath this morning, and he was so indignant at my offering him advice that he sat for I don't know how long with his feet in iced water."

A half smile crossed A.'s face as I said this, but he was too ill to retort.

"Of course he must now see a doctor," said Mr. Mark. "All doubt about his condition is at an end. He is going to have

something, and as we can't tell what, we must find some one who can."

"What sort of men are these Mallorcan doctors?" I asked.

"Old women; very nice old ladies," murmured A. "If you want to get rid of me more quickly than you otherwise would, send for them by all means."

"Poor fellow! Wandering, decidedly wandering," said Mark. "I have the highest opinion of the Mallorcan doctors, and have known them perform wonders."

"So have I," returned A., who shifted his position uneasily every two moments: now sitting up in a reclining chair, now throwing himself full length on a divan. "So have I. Wonders of stupidity.—What about your reception to-day?"

"Ah, by the way," returned Mr. Mark. "It has swelled to dimensions I never anticipated. From half-a-dozen, it has risen to half a hundred and more. All the rank and beauty of Palma will be there. You, my dear A., will not be able to favour me with your presence; but," turning to me with a polite bow, "you, I trust, will not fail me."

I replied with a due appreciation of his kindness, and assured him that it would be my pleasure to obey. Of course, like the governor of a larger island, he is to some extent Her Majesty's Representative, and we English should hold his wishes in the light of a Command; especially when they are such pleasant wishes.

"And now," said Mark, "I am off for the doctor. And if there should be no reason against it, I intend to exercise my authority and make you both come up for a few days to my house, where, at least, you will have fresh air. A. will never get better in this gloomy old palace. You are in the very centre of the most unhealthy part of Palma, and there is scarcely any disease that you might not fall a prey to."

"Job's comforter," murmured A., whilst I devoutly hoped this graphic picture was unconsciously exaggerated.

The Consulate, I must tell you, is the most delightfully situated house in the whole of Palma. As one generally does abroad, Mr. Mark occupies a flat in a new house, built with many of the modern improvements. I shall never forget the first time that I saw the view from his window. It was on the occasion of my first visit to Palma, in the winter. I am convinced there are few views in the world to equal it. I had called in the afternoon, and the shutters were all closed to keep out the glare of light, which some people find trying to the complexion.

He threw them back, and I was startled at so much sudden glory. Before us, almost at our very feet, separated only by the ramparts, was spread the Mediterranean in all its grandeur. Far and wide stretched the blue waters, flashing in the warm December sunshine. Small boats, with white-winged sails flitted to and fro. Across, to the right, rose far-off hills. Nearer, were the heights of Bellver,

crowned by the ancient historical castle: a castle that has seen strange revolutions, and within whose walls, from time to time, have transpired deeds of nameless cruelty. Below it, stretched the white picturesque houses of Il Tereno: a district to which the inhabitants of Palma fly in summer for refuge from the terrible heat of the town. Here there is always a breeze: it is ever more or less cool and agreeable. Yet further beyond it rose the lighthouse and little harbour of Porto Pi; smaller, but far more romantic than the harbour of Palma itself. Far away stretched the land, point beyond point, until the last point melted in a hazy distance, and sea and sky seemed to blend and lose themselves in each other.

All round the coast might be traced the exquisite white edge of the water, and one could imagine its soothing, plashing sound, as it rolled and rippled over the white sand, or gently broke at the foot of the red rocks which abound on the shores of this lovely island.

Immediately below us was the garden belonging to the house. Mr. Mark takes no interest in it, nor, apparently, does anyone else. It is very much of a wilderness, yet a wilderness of beauty. Palm-trees wave their feathery crests, and flowers blossom amidst a confusion of shrubs and brambles. I am sorry to have to record it, but this lovely wilderness seems to be the haunt and abode of numerous progenies of cats. I never look over into this garden without seeing a small army of them stealthily prowling about after the manner of their kind, as if they were all so many scouts or outposts on the watch for an enemy.

Within, the rooms are charming. They open into each other, and from end to end you have a long vista terminating in two rooms fitted up as conservatories, cool and lovely with well-trained ferns and drooping creepers, the gorgeous flowers of this matchless southern clime. Mr. Mark has also a magnificent collection of old curiosities—Majolica plates, ancient brass lamps, old and wonderfully-carved wood-work, in the form of coffers and cabinets. His walls and doors and tables literally groan with his collection, which he has arranged with great taste. It is difficult to go about his rooms without breaking the tenth commandment and envying your neighbour's goods. You would think that he had ransacked all the bric-à-brac shops of Palma for a century past, and exhausted them for a century to come.

When Mr. Mark proposed that A. should for a few days transfer his quarters from the old palace to such rooms as these, I felt the wisdom as well as the kindness of the thought. In our old palace we are certainly in danger of suffocation. Large though the rooms are, the heat from the opposite houses seems to radiate upon us with irresistible force. Of breeze and fresh air we have none—can have none. At the Consulate, on the other hand, regularly every morning, all the year round, a breeze springs up at ten o'clock, cool and delicious, and almost invigorating. This is another reason why Mr. Mark has been so fortunate in securing his

present quarters. Anywhere else, Palma, all the year round, would be unendurable.

But when he included me in the invitation, I felt that it would be too great a trespass. We should become an invasion; houses will not expand on demand; and I was not suffering from a mysterious and constant headache. But I said nothing for the moment. Events should take their course. First and foremost we must see the doctor and hear his opinion. He might not allow his patient to be moved.

Mark departed, but the morning passed and no doctor arrived; and when, about four o'clock, I left A. worse than ever, and went off to the Consulate, still no doctor had made his appearance.

BANALBUFAR.

"How is he?" was Mr. Mark's first question. "What says Dr. M.?"

"Dr. M. hasn't been," I returned; "and A. seems to grow worse every hour."

"Very strange! But doctors here are a little slow and uncertain. Shouldn't wonder if he's there now. What do you think it can be?"

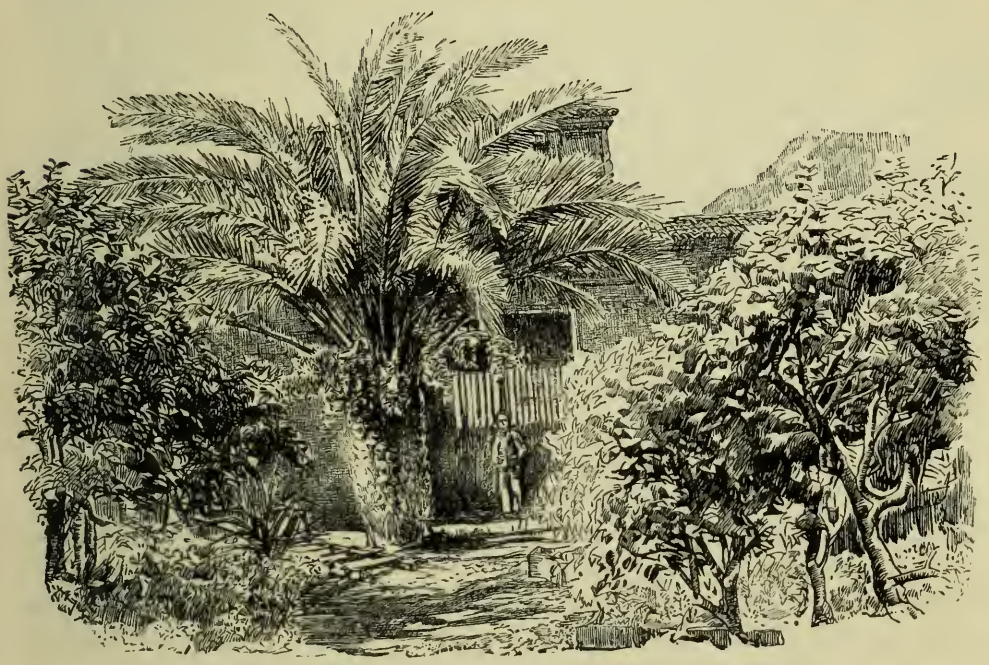
I shook my head wisely. This was an oracular and safe answer, capable of any interpretation. It is as well never to hazard an opinion when you are in doubt.

"I'm afraid so," said Mark. But what he was afraid of, or what he read in my shake of the head, I could not tell. Then he went off to fulfil his duties as host.

The rooms were already full of a well-dressed assembly: the rank and fashion of Palma. They have a curious custom here. The

married ladies keep to one corner of the room, the married men to another, the single ladies to a third corner, and the single men to a fourth. If there were a fifth order of beings, I don't know what they would do. In some of the very poor houses in London four families will occupy a room, one in each corner, and from motives of economy a lodger will be taken in in the middle; but in polite society this does not happen.

All the ladies to-day were in one room. Many of them were richly dressed, and many of the girls were pretty and graceful, with their mantillas and head-dresses and dark flashing eyes. Some of these mantillas were of white lace, cunningly disposed about the head;



THE PALM TREE OF ANDRAIX.

and these, I believe, are only worn on special occasion, when they wish to pay a particular mark of honour and respect to their host.

The outer rooms were crowded with men, many of whom had curious ways and manners; and I confess that, pleased as I was to look on and have this opportunity of seeing a little of Palma society, I was not in the least inspired with a desire to become intimate with them. There was a Spanish man-of-war in the bay, and some of the most curious specimens in the room were two of the lieutenants, who looked exactly as if they had descended from monkeys. One wondered how they would behave in battle: whether they would climb the masts and throw cocoa-nuts at the enemy.

I was disappointed at hearing no music. In place of this there was dancing, but it was curious and not very graceful dancing. Somehow, dancing by daylight never does seem very graceful. To an Englishman, too, dancing in a tropical heat is not to be atoned

for by any number of ices. In England, of course, we do not dance on a Sunday afternoon, but over here it is a different thing. I could not quite see the pleasure of it; for as soon as the dance was over, the young lady was immediately conducted to her corner by her cavalier, and taken leave of with a bow.

The married or single men, too, are not allowed to talk to the married ladies; it is contrary to the rules of the island; so that the ladies here are very much in the position of the ladies of a Turkish Harem, with very little more liberty, though apparently free to come and go as they will. A married lady in Palma never goes out alone, and cannot do so.

To-day, I need not say that Mrs. Bateman shone out conspicuously as the only Englishwoman and the only really well-dressed in the room. After all, no woman in the world knows how to dress as perfectly as an English gentlewoman.

Mr. Bateman had asked me about A., and I had replied that the doctor had not yet been; at the same time informing him of Mr. Mark's proposition that we should for a few days take up our abode at the Consulate. "For my own part, I feel that I cannot do this," I added. "It would be an invasion, and Barbara might reasonably become rebellious."

Barbara is the genius who presides over Mark's bachelor establishment. She is of an age when people do not like to be put violently out of their ordinary lines. But she is a character; an original; with a face as hard as steel, though as honest as the day. I believe there is a fund of dry humour in Barbara, but alas, I cannot reach it; we cannot speak each other's language. I am much taken with Barbara.

"You are quite right," returned Bateman. "I think it would be rather an irruption upon the Consulate. I am going to the Albufera to-morrow for four days. It is a part of the island you have not seen, and I think you would find a good deal to interest you. If you will accompany me it will give me great pleasure. In the meantime, A. can come up here. Probably the change will put him right, and by Thursday you can both return to that gloomy old dungeon of a palace. I told A. at the time that he was mad to take it. If he cannot return on Thursday, then I hope you will come up and stay with us at Il Tereno."

This was most kind, and the very manner in which the invitation was given made it infinitely more acceptable. I promised, at any rate, to accompany him to the Albufera: and not very long after this, anxious about A., I took my leave.

Arrived at our old palace, with its deep, overhanging eaves, I found an old gentleman gazing about him, looking very lost and helpless. I thought this was possibly Dr. M., and waited a moment, but my heart rather sank within me. He came up to me. "Vous êtes Monsieur Wood?" he asked, and I wondered how he knew me, or my name, or anything about me.

I conducted him through the courtyard up the old stone staircase, and introduced him into the presence of his patient. A. looked very ill; was evidently suffering terribly; and I felt more and more anxious about him. Illness in a foreign land, at the mercy of foreign doctors, always seems to me to be three chances to one against recovery.

Well, Dr. M. went through the usual routine: felt the pulse, looked at the tongue, touched the head, sounded the lungs. Luckily he talked French; a limited French, but still enough to get on with. A. of course talks Mallorcan, but A. was almost too ill to talk anything.

"What do you think it is?" I asked nervously.

Dr. M. shook his head, but it didn't go down with me as mine had gone down with Mark.

"I don't understand," I said.

"Very bad headache," replied Dr. M. "That is certain."

Point No. 1, I thought. Shall we arrive at Point No. 2? "What next?" I enquired.

"It may be sunstroke," said Dr. M., "and it may not be sunstroke. It may be better to-morrow, and it may be worse. He may be going to have fever, or he may be going to have something else."

This was too much. "In short," I said, laughing, but really exasperated, and quoting again the silly old German saying: "Kann sein, Kann auch nicht sein, Kann doch sein! What is to be will be."

"I don't understand English," returned Dr. M., severely. "I beg that our conversation be confined to French." It was German, of course, but never mind; it was equally the same to him.

"Don't put the old fellow out," said A., who could not help smiling. "He might poison us, you know—for, after this, I shall make you take half the physic he prescribes. I told you these Mallorcan doctors were nothing but old women. I might just as well consult old Catalina, our cordon bleu, as you persist in calling her."

Of course you must bear in mind that we are both a little prejudiced; yet not very much so.

"What do you advise?" I asked Dr. M. in my most deferential manner, for I really did not want to be poisoned. "A. sat with his feet for half-an-hour this morning in cold water. What do you think of that?"

Dr. M. tapped his forehead. "Perfectly mad," he cried. "You must put your feet into *boiling* water," he declared, with the first approach at energy he had yet shown: "and then you must go to bed and take gruel."

Then he wrote out some hieroglyphical prescriptions, and retired, promising an early visit the next morning.

Thus rests the matter. After Dr. M.'s departure, A. declared he should not put his feet into boiling water, should not go to bed, should not take gruel. I do not argue with him, for I feel it would be useless. He himself thinks that he has caught a slight sunstroke and that a few days will put him right again. I have great doubts

upon the subject, but I will not be a prophet of evil. Certainly out here it would be worse than folly to meet trouble half way. To-morrow, if there is no great change for the worse, and he can be moved, he will go up to the Consulate, whilst I and Mr. Bateman shall be wending our way to the Albufera. What the future has in store for us, the future must disclose. It is now the small hours of the night; we are steeped in silence; would I could hope that A. is steeped in repose. No sound breaks upon my ear other than the scratch of my pen travelling over the paper, and the melancholy call of an imprisoned quail. For the first time to-night these great rooms and echoing walls are creepy with shadows and fraught with omen. But from their silence and gloom, my sister, sitting as I know you are with Sorrow for your companion, I waft you a far-off benediction.

RONDEAU.

LONG ago, when youth was gay,
We two dreamed our lives should grow
Like two flowers in one sweet May—
And we told each other so.
You have gone: Time's fingers gray
Blind my eyes with showerèd snow:
Hope and youth look far away—
Long ago.

Yet the summer winds, I know,
Will blow soft, one perfect day,
Melt the snows and roses strow:
"Ah, what cold winds used to blow
When I was alone," you'll say—
"Long ago!"

E. NESBIT.

JARRETT'S JUBILEE.

By Walter Helmore.

TWO straggling rows of old houses; a church; a pump. Such is the village of Dinley, in Essex.

It was towards this romantic spot that a worn-out fly, drawn by a worn-out horse and driven by a worn-out man, made its way on a bright May morning of the year 1887.

Inside the fly sat an old man of some seventy winters—nothing in his unhappy face suggested summer—who, from time to time, would put his hoary head out of the window and urge the man on the box to quicken the four-miles-an-hour pace at which both horse and driver seemed content to jog on.

"If you don't go on a little faster than this, I may as well get out and walk," he exclaimed in wrath, as his head went out of the window for about the twentieth time.

"It's all right, sir," answered the man; "here we are."

With these words he brought the conveyance to a standstill.

The spot on which he had stopped was opposite the first house you come to on entering the village of Dinley from the south.

"Wait here," said the old man, as he alighted from the carriage.

"Shall you be long?" asked the driver.

"I don't know," was the only answer that came from the traveller's lips, as, with sturdy steps, he made his way towards the church, which stood at the end of the one and only street in Dinley.

As he progressed upon his journey, however, the old man's pace became slower, and the few inhabitants of the village who saw him pass, had they looked more closely into his face, might have detected a tear trickling down the careworn cheek.

"There's the old cottage," he muttered to himself, as he passed in front of a neat little dwelling, with flower-pots in the windows. "I wonder who lives there now? I haven't the heart to go and ask."

A few more steps brought him to the church—as hideous a building as the Protestants of the eighteenth century have produced (this is saying much)—and now the tears, which he had tried to keep back during his walk, would no longer remain under the partial control he had, until now, held over them.

"It's no good," he sobbed; "I can't help it. She said that one day I should weep for my sins, and she was right."

He opened the gate which led into the churchyard, and made his way along a little path to the other side of the church.

Here he paused and began to look at the monuments and tombstones, evidently bent on finding some one particular grave. At last he came upon what he was in search of, as his exclamation proved.

"Ah, this is it!"

He had stopped in his walk opposite a large grave. On the tombstone were to be found, in various phases of legibility, the following inscriptions :—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
JOSEPH JARRETT,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON THE 12TH JULY, 1847,
IN THE SIXTY-SECOND YEAR OF HIS AGE.

ALSO TO
ANN,
WIFE OF THE ABOVE, WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
ON THE 1ST FEBRUARY, 1850, AGED 65.

ALSO TO
JAMES JARRETT,
SON OF THE ABOVE,
WHO FELL ASLEEP DECEMBER 21ST, 1857, AGED 41.

ALSO TO
JOSEPH,
ELDEST SON OF JOSEPH AND ANN JARRETT, OF THIS PARISH,
WHO WAS LOST IN THE WRECK OF THE *Selkirk*,
10TH MARCH, 1861.
R. I. P.

"Lost in the wreck of the *Selkirk*," muttered the old man. "I sometimes think to myself it would have been better if I had gone down with all those good chaps."

His thoughts now flowed into a fresh channel.

"I don't see Mary's name; it's odd. Can she have survived all my cruelty and neglect? Surely they would have buried her here."

"And yet," he went on, "I don't suppose the old place had many attractions for her after our last parting, when I—— "

The sound of a footstep upon the gravel path put a stop to the old man's musings. He turned round to see who the new-comer might be.

Walking very slowly along the way he had just come was an old woman. She was some distance as yet from the Jarrett grave, so he could not, through his tearful eyes, distinguish her features. Realising, however, the fact that she was likely to pass the place where he stood, the old man hastily retired to a spot close by, which was more hidden by the budding trees. It was his intention to remain here till the woman had passed by the grave which gave him so much interest, and when she had gone, renew his meditations over the tomb of his relatives.

What was his surprise, however, when the old lady paused at the foot of the grave he had just been looking at.

"Why," he exclaimed, "she is going to my grave, and—— "

He came to an abrupt stop. The woman had seated herself, and was placing a wreath of bright flowers just beneath the inscription which spoke of the loss of Joseph Jarrett in the *Selkirk*. Till now her eyes had been fixed upon the ground, but as she completed her little memorial act, she raised her head as if to ask a blessing on the soul of the shipwrecked mariner.

The man started back with an exclamation of surprise.

"By heaven! It's Mary!"

He steadied himself by clutching the railings of an old family tomb which stood among the trees, and stared at the woman, who was still unconscious of his presence.

"What should he do?" he asked himself. Should he rush abruptly forward and say: "Here is your husband! Here is the man to whose memory you are paying tribute; whom you, years ago, chose out of *all* the young men who were eager to make you their bride?"

The woman was too much absorbed in her pious task to give a thought to the possibility of there being any observer close at hand. Joseph Jarrett was able, therefore, to leave his hiding-place and approach the grave which bore his memorial on its stone without disturbing his wife's meditation.

It was a curious position these two found themselves placed in; the woman, reading the inscription which told her of her husband's death; the husband, standing behind her, *alive* and well.

Providence is ever merciful. Two souls, at last worthy of each other, and beating hearts, awakened to the fact that union is their only chance of true happiness, *must* meet.

The man was the first to break the silence.

"I beg your pardon ——" he began, but a lump in his throat prevented further utterance. The woman's eyes were filled with tears.

"I didn't know anyone was about," she said, as she tried to hastily brush away the traces of her sorrow.

"I shouldn't have disturbed you," said Jarrett, "only I came to this churchyard to ——"

"To what?"

The man paused a moment, and then plunged abruptly in *medias res*.

"I came here," he answered, "to see the grave of my old friend, Joseph Jarrett."

His wife started.

"Joseph Jarrett!" she said; "did you know Joseph?"

"Oh, yes; I've been with him on several occasions. I was in the wreck of the *Selkirk*."

"Oh, you were one of the few who were saved from the wreck?"

"Yes."

The memory of the disaster seemed to silence Jarrett. His wife looked enquiringly at him, and then said:

"Did Joseph ever say anything of friends—of relations of his that he had left in England?"

"Why, yes, he often spoke of the wife he had so cruelly deserted."

"Poor Joseph!"

A slight quiver agitated the muscular frame of the old man. He overcame his emotion, however, and continued:

"Jarrett, you see, had a lot to answer for. He behaved like a scoundrel to his poor wife ——"

"He's dead now," interrupted Mrs. Jarrett; "and I think, if he was your friend, that you might do better than say anything against his memory."

"Well, he was a bad man, was poor Joe."

"No, he wasn't. He may have been wild, and perhaps weak, but his heart was good."

The old man's face brightened up at these kindly words, but he continued his sweeping criticism of Joseph Jarrett's memory.

"I can't see," he said, "how anyone can excuse Joe's conduct. He was only a worry and anxiety to his poor wife, and *he* knew it right enough."

"Perhaps the wife didn't do all in her power to make him happy?"

"She was an angel!" exclaimed Jarrett. "Far too good for the likes of Joe."

"How do you know?" exclaimed the old woman.

"Well, you see," he answered, "Joseph and me were pals, and many a time would he speak of her and the past. Often and often he's said to me, 'If ever I am taken away, her path in life will be smoother.' Why, I remember, when the *Selkirk* was being dashed about like a cork on the angry waves, Joe's thoughts were this, that heaven had sent the storm to free his wife from a bad husband."

"Joe's thoughts?"

"Yes, he told them to me."

"Ah! How little he knew me!"

"You!"

"Yes, I am Joseph Jarrett's widow."

The man had been waiting for this communication.

"Do you ever think that you would have been glad to see Joseph before he met—with his—sad end?"

Mr. Jarrett had some difficulty in completing his question.

"Glad to see Joseph! Why, for all these long years I have had a sort of aching feeling here"—she touched her heart—"to think that he passed away without my being able to say to him, 'Joe, I want to make you happier. In the past I worried and scolded and tried to

drive you, but now let us turn over a new leaf, and try to lead each other instead.'"

"But would Joseph have listened to such good words, wouldn't he have gone back to his old tempestuous life——?"

"Ah! You don't know Joe's heart."

"*I* don't!"

He stopped abruptly and then turned to his wife.

"Can you bear to hear some news which concerns you and Joseph?"

She hesitated and looked earnestly in her husband's face.

"Joe!—My Joe!"

The truth had suddenly flashed upon her.

Two hours afterwards, Jarrett and his wife were seated, side by side, in the cosy cottage.

"Joe," said the old woman, as his protecting arm was drawn more closely round her, "do you know what to-day is?"

"Yes, dear, our Golden Wedding. I came back to England on purpose to visit the grave to-day; but, thank God, where I expected to find the dead, I found the living."

"And you'll never leave me again, Joe?"

"Never; this is our Jubilee-day, and, from henceforth, I pray that I may never part from you."

"*Our* Jubilee, Joe! No monarch ever had such a happy Jubilee as ours."

MY WICKED ANCESTRESS.

WITHOUT: Fog, drifting in dim wreaths of sooty vapour between my dirty windows and the dismal frontage of the opposite side of a street of superior lodging-houses.

Within: A fire smouldering under a mountain of slack; chairs and tables and a looking-glass murkily reflecting my melancholy self, an Army List and a yellow envelope.

In the distance, the departing wheels of my doctor's brougham faintly audible for some moments longer; then silence, but for the ticking of the clock and the distant cry of an evening paper vendor.

"No organic disease," my doctor—my sole friend in London—had pronounced some ten minutes ago: "Considerable derangement of the nervous system: want of tone," etc. "Haven't you any friends who will give you a mount during the hunting season, or can't you get some shooting somewhere?" were the good man's last suggestions, with "Doesn't *anybody* want you for Christmas?" by way of post-script.

Wanted! save the mark! When had I been wanted in all my life? Not from my birth. That had been decidedly inconvenient to a gay young couple with limited means and a taste for society. Later on, in my school-boy lifetime, I was even less welcome, though the days of my parents' poverty were over. My pretty little baby-sister, who had judiciously deferred her advent for six years after mine, was quite as much of "a family" as my graceful young mother cared to produce. I was too big, too ugly, and, I am afraid, too out-spoken to be a desirable addition to her home circle.

I don't think I was wanted in my regiment when I joined, being quiet, poor and unsocial; not a type cherished by the gallant 200th.

I was still one too many when my father died; and the remains of his property, when collected and divided into three, proved such a miserable pittance for my mother and sister that I could but "efface myself" as speedily as possible, resign my claim to a share, and effect an exchange to India.

I think there I had a brief delusion that my existence was necessary to somebody. Once a quarter came an elegant little acknowledgment from my mother of the small allowance my Indian pay enabled me to make her, and now and then was enclosed a schoolgirl scrawl—very cheering and heart-warming to read—from my little sister, Clarice.

I had just got into the way of looking forward to mail-days and trying to make my letters home interesting and provocative of replies, when I received the announcement of Clarice's marriage to somebody in the city; and, directly after, of my mother's engagement to M. le Vicomte de Pignerolles. I despatched the handsomest

pair of wedding presents my finances would allow to Madame la Vicomtesse and Mrs. Van Schendal, and dropped out of their lives, less wanted than ever.

I never meant to return to England. Why should I? I had made some "skin-deep" friendships in India, and stuck to my work there—I really believe because I was wanted at it.

However, they sent me home. "The man's dying, and won't believe it," I overheard the old surgeon say. I *did* believe it, but I didn't happen to care. Not the saintliest recluse could hold more lightly to the things of this world than did I. My days were numbered? Good. It was no wish of mine to prolong or shorten them. I would return to England, get the best medical advice and act on it. I would set my affairs in order—a light labour that—and without either conscious bravado or resignation, await the end.

So now, to carry out my good physician's parting prescription, "Look up some friends," I had announced my arrival to my sister, and had made my way to Van Schendal's office in the city. He was in Amsterdam on business, the big house in Grosvenor Square shut up, and Mrs. Van Schendal away on a round of visits. Madame la Vicomtesse was at Nice; hoped to be in town in May and make me known to her Maxime.

An old brother officer met me and asked me to dinner at the club; and a man I had known and been of some slight service to in India gave me two days' shooting in Lincolnshire. So far I had obeyed my medical friend's orders. I had tried sight-seeing, theatre-going, small expeditions in different directions, but the sense of friendlessness only grew more burdensome, and I had returned, almost gladly, to the familiar hideousness of my lodging-house surroundings.

I stood for some time, I remember, looking out into the sea of swirling dinginess that grew denser every moment, and then, chilled and disheartened, turned to my fire. A cloud of black smoke and a cataract of coal-dust descending into the fender was the sole result of my operations with the poker, so I gave it up and rang for assistance and candles.

"A telegram!" I exclaimed with languid surprise. "How did it get here?" I remembered something being brought into the room while my doctor was with me, but had forgotten the fact. I waited till lights came, and then opened it incuriously.

"*From Sir Thos. Waldron, Broadstone, Marlby, Yorks, to Capt. Basil Acton*, 14, *Atherton Place, London.*—Just heard of your arrival. Welcome home. Come to us at once for Christmas, and as much longer as possible."

A full shillingsworth of kindliness, and every word of it genuine. An actual physical glow of warmth and comfort suffused me as I read.

Sir Thomas Waldron is my cousin, the head of our family. He had crossed my path in life several times, and never without doing me some kindness; but that was long ago; and since then he had quarrelled first with my father and then with my mother, and I never expected to be remembered by him.

The invitation touched me deeply. It may seem odd, but had I been free to choose, I should have declined it. I shrank now from forming new ties to life.

"He'll not see the year out," my old Indian Army surgeon had said of me, and I believed him. "No organic disease, no functional derangement," my London friend assured me, with a perplexed face, and I believed him, too. Only a gradual failing of the principle of life—call it what you will. Days of weakness, nights of wakeful torture. I shrank from inflicting myself and my miseries on a gay, hospitable household, such as I imagined the Waldrons' to be, and took pen and paper to send a grateful refusal. Then, moved by something in the very look of the telegram as it lay before me, I hastily scribbled a few lines, telling, as briefly as I could, what it has taken me all these pages to explain, and, mistrustful of my own resolution, sent it to be posted without further delay.

So it came to pass that three days before Christmas I found myself in the train, speeding northwards through clear, keen moorland air; leaving London fog and mud two hundred miles behind.

It was a plunge into a new life to alight at the little station where every creature knew at once that I was come on a visit to Sir Thomas, and took a personal interest in me from that moment. The station-master, the porter, the sedate old coachman who met me with the brougham, the old goody at the lodge gate, all beamed broad welcomes from their honest Yorkshire faces.

The stately ranges of windows twinkled hospitably in the southern sunlight, and under the portico stood waiting my cousin Thomas himself, his grey hair blowing about in the wind, and his blue eyes shining with cordial greeting.

"My dear fellow! I *am* glad to see you. Come in, come in! Ismay, my dear! Here he is!" and he led me into the hall where Lady Waldron was waiting.

Two soft little hands were put into mine, two clear dark eyes shone on me like kindly stars, and before the sweet low voice had ceased the music of its welcome, I was taken possession of, body and soul, and held captive in a bondage that will last my life.

This is no harrowing romance of love and guilt. I do not covet my neighbour's wife any more than I do the great iron-grey hunter that comes next in his affections. She is old enough to be my mother. Her hair is snowy white, and her sweet old face criss-crossed by many a wrinkle; but Ismay Waldron is one of those born queens of hearts whom age cannot depose, and I am the humblest of her subjects.

"Come and have some luncheon," spoke Sir Thomas, breaking in on my trance of admiration. "We are alone to-day. Everyone gone to a breakfast and drag-hunt at the Barracks. It's quite a treat to have time to speak to one another; eh, Ismay?"

"Let me first show Basil his rooms," she said, "that he may know where to retreat when he has had enough of us."

My bed-room was a queer, many-angled chamber in the corner of the building, looking northward.

"Bad for an invalid, I know," Lady Waldron said, "but we had no other to spare. You must live *here* as much as possible."

She flung open a door into a flood of western sunshine pouring through two large mullioned windows into what was manifestly a lady's boudoir filled with all sorts of feminine prettinesses.

"This is my special den, but I gladly give it up to you. I honestly prefer the children's old school-room. This is to be your kingdom. The bell will summon a servant who is to be your special attendant. Give him your orders. You are to live here and visit us only when it so pleases you. I alone reserve the right of intruding on you. Now you must remember the geography of the place. That door behind the piano is fastened up. It opens into my dressing-room, but I never used it except in summer. The opposite one leads into your bed-room, and this one into the passage, on to which our rooms open (you see my present sitting-room is just across it), and so to the main staircase. You are sure to lose yourself once or twice at first. Nothing in this house ever ends where you naturally expect it should."

We returned to my bed-room, which had another entrance and a separate staircase and corridor all to itself, dim with borrowed lights and ghostly with flapping tapestry, but convenient as communicating with the servants' hall, where my appointed guardian angel, Micklethwaite by name, was to be found.

Much to Sir Thomas's satisfaction, after luncheon I professed myself equal to the inspection of the Home Farm—his pride and delight, and we three set out for a tour of the place.

Broadstone is a low, castellated grey pile, a famous stronghold in its day. The sun, wind and rain of centuries have worked their will on the grim old building, mellowing and softening, crumbling off angles, yellowing the roofs with lichen and hanging the battlements with ivy till it seems to have grown into one with the great crag on which it stands. The Waldrons have held it for generations. May their names be long in the land!

"I see some of our guests have returned," Lady Waldron said, as we passed the lighted library windows. "Had you not better come in and meet them by degrees, instead of en masse at dinner?"

I assenting, we made our way to the open door through which a rush of firelight and gentle clamour of high-bred voices streamed out into the cold dark hall.

A tall girl, with a beautiful figure, in a tight satin gown, formed the centre of a group round the hearth, and was speaking loudly and decisively.

"Guinevere, of course, or Brunhilda. There cannot be two opinions on the subject. Herr von Kreifeldt's golden love-locks and wavy beard are too unspeakably precious in these close-cropped days to be wasted. Is there no other legend of Arthur?"

"Elaine," suggested somebody.

"Who's to be Lancelot? He must be an utter contrast; and where we are to find anybody gaunt and hollow-eyed, and heavy-moustached, and world-weary, and generally bilious-looking enough ——"

The speaker stopped short as her gaze met mine; so short that I at once felt an assurance that she was afraid I should consider her remarks personal.

Lady Waldron glided in gently amongst them, introducing me quietly and rapidly. "Captain Acton, Miss Fordyce, Major Grimshaw, Sir Derwent Freemantle, Mrs. Charles Halliday," and some half-dozen more; and then let me sink unobserved into a big chair in a dim corner.

There was to be a fancy ball on New Year's Eve, I found, and it was suggested that some tableaux vivants should precede it, the main difficulty seeming to be that everyone with a dress wished for a tableaux especially designed to exhibit it.

I was dimly amused at it all. The figures and voices seemed to belong to some shadowy region of visions that I was powerless to enter or approach. I felt beyond it all in some way, as though I were a ghostly visitant watching the scenes in which I might once have taken part. Only my cousin Ismay's voice and touch seemed to reach me now and then across the gulf. Then the sounds grew fainter in my ears—the lights dimmer. A deadly faintness seized me, and I struggled to my feet and hurried dizzily from the room. Sir Thomas met me in the hall, and helped me to my own quarters, where he left me under Micklethwaite's care for the rest of the evening.

"I should never have come," I was protesting miserably to myself in a fit of self-reproach after my solitary dinner, when the door opened suddenly, and a gracious vision shone in on me—Cousin Ismay in her shimmering satin and soft old lace.

"You did too much for your first day," she said. "No, don't stir. We don't know how to take care of invalids in this house. No one has ever ailed anything since Steevie came home from Oxford with a broken collar-bone."

I don't know how it came about, but ten minutes later I was talking to her as I had never done to mortal in my life before, telling her thoughts and feelings that I had never dreamt of putting into words, led on by the magnetism of her dark, kind eyes. She sighed

when I ceased, but made no effort to contradict or soften my last words. "I am a dying man, Cousin Ismay, and your goodness only makes me feel that there is something in the world that I might have prized and lost."

"And Clarice?" she asked.

I smiled, not bitterly, but indifferently.

"Does Clarice count for nothing with you? Dear girl! I have been looking forward to your home-coming so much on her account. If only you were always at hand to fill a want in her life, as no one else can."

"I! Clarice!" I exclaimed, in blank amaze.

"Poor little child! we all love her very dearly. It is through her we seem to have known you so well all these years. You have been her hero, her ideal, from her childhood. I think she chafed impatiently under the idea that your life and prospects were crippled to support her lately, and that your mother rather worked on the feeling in Mr. Van Schendal's behalf."

I gave an impatient start; but Ismay went on composedly, gazing thoughtfully at the fire.

"He is a good sort of man in his way: kind to her, but immersed, body and soul, in his business, and she is such a child—poor, lonely Clarice! How glad she will be to come here to us!"

I sat too stupefied to ask more, and Cousin Ismay presently left me to muse, with a pang of bitter sweetness, that there were more in the world to regret me than I should have counted on.

I strove hard to repay my host's kindness next day by resolutely abandoning all semblance of invalidism; went with Sir Thomas to the County Town, on magistrate's business, in the morning; drove with Ismay, and some of her guests, to an "At Home" in the afternoon, and actually promised to ride to the meet next day.

"I'll find you a *very* quiet mount," Sir Thomas said; thereby intensifying my determination to follow the hounds at all hazards.

I faced the dinner-party that evening—a large one, augmented by guests arrived for the Christmas festivities. Miss Fordyce fell to my lot, and I honestly tried to adjust my ideas to hers, with faint success. The rest of the evening I felt I might righteously shirk, and made my way to the library, to say "Good-night" to Sir Thomas, who had some writing to do there. I found the room empty, however, and dropped into an arm-chair by the fire, awaiting him in a lazy, pleasantly tired, frame of mind and body.

That red curtain? I hadn't noticed it before. Had it been drawn across the picture since I was last in the room? Or had the corner always been in shadow till that big log split asunder and rolled on the hearth in flaming fragments?

There was a family portrait, dingy and indistinguishable, in each of the other recesses between the book-shelves. What did this frame hold? What concern was it of mine? Something old and classic,

as valuable as improper, I supposed. I was quite awake now, sitting bolt-upright and staring at the thing. I might just as well get up altogether, and settle my mind by crossing the room and drawing the curtain. I would.

Bah! What *is* there in the touch of red velvet that should make me shudder and sicken? I could no more grasp that curtain strongly and draw it aside than I could touch a slimy reptile without a qualm. What ails my nerves? Over-wrought, most certainly; or why do I stand gazing blankly at that veiled picture: nailed to the spot, yet with a sense of mysterious dread and repulsion thrilling every nerve?

Here Sir Thomas entered briskly, and I turned to him.

"What is that?" I asked briefly.

"That? Oh, nothing, nothing!—an old family portrait: a shocking bad one. You don't want to see it, eh?" he said hurriedly.

"But I *do*—most particularly."

Sir Thomas thrust his hands into his pockets, and took an impatient turn up and down the room, visibly bothered.

"Tut, tut! What will Ismay say? *She* so particularly said you mustn't. Now *what* do you want to see it for?"

"I don't know; only I feel as if I should have no peace till I did."

"Oh, come; that settles it," and he extended his hand to the curtain—then withdrew it suddenly. "Ismay said something about your nerves, I know. Now, *do* you think it can do any harm? All of us but you have seen it, and nobody is any the worse," and again he approached his hand, hesitatingly, this time. "Of course, the legend is all bosh, you understand. *You* don't believe it?"

"How can I tell when I don't know it?"

"Oh, then, it's all right!"

And Sir Thomas, evidently relieved in mind, pulled aside the velvet folds, disclosing a faded canvas.

Only a girl's portrait—a slim young figure, in a dress of the early Stuart period: grey, fur-trimmed, with a silver girdle, at which hung an ostrich-feather fan. Her hair was tucked back under a velvet hood, and in one hand she held a riding-mask. Such were the details, painted with little art, but none could dwell on them, so agonizingly realistic was the expression of horror in the large grey eyes and drawn mouth.

A face to haunt one, not from any beauty of its own—a face of one stricken to death or madness by some ghastly terror.

I shuddered and turned away, and Sir Thomas dropped the curtain.

"Who is it?" I asked, with an effort.

"Bless me! Do you mean to say you never heard of her? Our (and your) great-great-great-great-great-great—yes, that's right, six greats—grandmother, Lady Sybilla Waldron, the beautiful young woman who bewitched our great-great-etc.-grandfather, and played the

deuce's own game with the property. An abandoned young hussy! She shut the poor old boy up in one of the towers while she and her disreputable crew of acquaintances held high jinks in the place. There was a handsome young scapegrace, son of the steward. Well, well, it's an ugly bit of family history—they say she went mad after her baby was born, and I'm sure I charitably hope so," blundered Sir Thomas. "Anyhow, it was believed that she meant to dispose of our unlucky old progenitor, and marry him as soon as might be, and some kind neighbour thought fit to send a warning off to the eldest son, her step-son, then serving in the Low Countries. Home he came post-haste. His servant fell ill at York, and he pushed on alone. Crossing the wildest part of Whinstanes Moor, he met with a reception, kindly arranged by his step-mother, that had all but put an end to his military career on the spot. Half-a-dozen armed varlets set on him, but thanks to his admirable swordsmanship and the fleetness of his good grey mare, he escaped them, and arrived at Broadstone in the height of the Christmas merry-making. The neighbours had gathered from far and near to welcome him, the poor old squire doddering feebly about in their midst, with Lady Sybilla at his side, the gayest of the gay."

"A pretty story," I remarked.

"Very! She welcomed her step-son lovingly, led him to receive his half-blind father's blessing, and, with much presence of mind, handed him a goblet of hot spiced wine, into which a special flavouring of her own had been dropped. He bowed courteously and pledged her; but before his lips had touched the cup, there was a clamour without, and two men entered bearing a third, stiff and stark, just as young Waldron had left him on the Whinstanes Moor. It was one of the ruffians who had attacked him, he said. But when they laid him in the light of the fire, then Lady Sybilla gave one awful shriek, and seizing the cup from her step-son's hand, drained it to the dregs, and fell senseless on the body of her lover. She died that night, raving mad. It saved her from a trial for murder and witchcraft, possibly. Anyhow, they buried her respectably in the family vault, and young Waldron stayed at home taking care of the property and his little half-brother, who eventually succeeded to it."

"Then we are descended from her?" I asked distastefully, as Sir Thomas finished the story, which came out with a fluency born of frequent narration.

"Of course we are, or we should never have heard more of her, I suppose."

"Why, what do we hear?"

"There, there! If I haven't let the cat out of the bag! Ismay says I'm never to be trusted! And you, of all people!" Sir Thomas rubbed his white head in vexation, till I expected to see sparks fly out of it. "Not a word to Basil till next week, at least, were her very words!"

"Why next week? And why not to me?"

"Because, don't you see, Christmas will be safely over then, and you won't be able to fancy anything, you know. If you were to suppose you saw her, in your state of health, of course you might go dwelling on it. It's been a legend of the place ever since I can remember. She passes through the house on Christmas Eve, they say, entering all the rooms, and imploring pardon from her descendants. If anyone had presence of mind to bid her 'Go in peace,' why, I suppose that would put a stop to it."

"Then why doesn't someone?"

"Because, you see, my dear boy, nobody can see her. Anyone who does is fated to die before the New Year is in; at least, so they say: but then nobody *has* seen her. Then again, nobody has died, so that disproves nothing."

"Is that all? Well, I don't feel much the worse for it, somehow. I'll not betray you to Lady Waldron; and if my wicked ancestress pays me a visit to-morrow night, I'll keep the fact to myself. I hope I shall remember the appropriate remark!"

"Don't, don't! My dear fellow, for mercy's sake don't talk as if you could possibly do such a thing! What? going already? Good-night, then, good-night. No stars to-night and the barometer gently falling. Ha, ha!"

As I walked down the dimly-lighted passage to my room, I thought how, only a night or two ago, I might have welcomed the fancy that perhaps for me there was a summons on the way from the Shadowland. Only a fancy; yet I had a curious wish that next night were over and the legend discredited.

"A southerly wind and a cloudy sky" next morning. A gay breakfast, a lawn meet and a day's sport in every way satisfactory to the M. F. H. and the noble earl whose covers we drew. My "quiet mount" was a knowing old hunter whose sagacity balanced my inexperience and brought me through the day with credit. I was glad to turn homewards as soon as I fairly could, and plodded unsociably back through the muddy lanes long before "Barnabas" thought proper.

I came in unobserved, dog-tired, and had been asleep on my sofa for some time before I was aware of voices close at hand. My cousin Thomas, from his dressing-room, was carrying on a conversation with his wife across the passage, evidently under the impression that they had that part of the house to themselves.

"We shall make a man of him yet. I never despair of any fellow who can ride straight and take a joke. It's rousing he wants—that's all. Can't you find him a wife, Ismay? Eh?—Miss Fordyce? Not a bit of it. You wait and see. I'm going to send him in to dinner to-morrow with that little Carruthers girl——"

Here I sprang from my sofa and softly closed my door on the rest of his benevolent intentions.

All the sudden rush of energy that had carried me through the last two days seemed exhausted. I spent the evening in solitude, except for a bright ten minutes when Ismay beamed in on me, followed by Sir Thomas, jovial and urgent that I should shake off the blues and join them downstairs. "It's enough to give you the horrors, moping up here; you'll get to fancying all sorts of things," with a meaning nod of ominous significance.

I read myself weary, now and then breaking off to think of Clarice, my little unknown sister, whom Ismay's revelations had set in so different a light. It was late before I went to bed; though, judging from the far away bursts of merriment that faintly reached me, long before the rest of the party. I slept soundly, and woke to hear the carol-singers in the courtyard under my window.

As I tried to follow them, the great turret clock slowly struck out midnight over the singers' heads. Its great resonant bell mixed so discordantly with the shrill minor lilt that I half laughed out to myself while waiting patiently for the final stroke.

I started up with the last sonorous boom. What was that step on the floor? Across my dark floor streamed a river of shining moonlight, and bathed in its rays stood a woman, grey and spectral.

I knew her. Her gleaming girdle and fur-trimmed gown, her eyes dilated with sudden terror, and her lips parted with a voiceless cry of agony!

Only for a second could I bear the gaze of the frenzied eyes. I sprang up, speechless in my bewilderment, and dashed forward to seize or strike, I hardly knew which, the phantom; but ere my foot touched the streak of moonlight, it was gone. I saw its white arms tossed wildly in the air; I heard the ghostly rustle of its garments just for one instant; then, stumbling forward into the darkness, I struck violently against the open door of my sitting-room, and nearly fell.

When I recovered myself, all was still and dark. I hastily lighted my candle and commenced a careful and exhaustive search of the two rooms. It proved perfectly fruitless, as I expected it would.

Had I been dreaming? No. I could repeat the words of the carol to which I had been listening, and which was still shrilling itself to an end outside.

Was it a practical joke? Oddly enough, the reason that prevented my searching the corridor also disposed of that theory. Simultaneously with the carols and the clock had commenced the sound of Sir Thomas's voice outside in converse with Ismay. I had gently opened my door and seen her sitting at her writing-table in the opposite room, while Sir Thomas seemed to be wandering in and out, exchanging desultory observations in a lower tone than usual, out of deference to my supposed slumbers.

Their presence effectually guarded my apartments from invasion on that side.

As to the second door of my bed-room, the slightest movement caused such a crazy creaking of its ancient frame, that I had locked it on Micklethwaite's departure that night, and locked it remained.

I put out my light and sank into a chair, startled, yet on the whole rather surprised at myself for not being more excited and impressed. My pulse was beating regularly. There was no tremor in my hand when I held it up before me, black against the moonlight. My head felt clear, my wits alert. I was in a perfectly calm and reasonable frame of mind, and yet, try as I would, I could neither explain away, nor persuade myself of the unreality of my shadowy visitor. Every detail of her appearance rose before me, distinct as a photograph. The great rippling mass of fair hair from which the velvet hood had fallen back, the long white arms flashing up suddenly from out the falling fur-edged sleeves, the silver clasps to her gown and the broidered pouch hanging at her girdle; just the little variations from the picture in the library that would mark the original, instead of the copy.

Then it was true, the family tradition, and if true——?

I started from my chair impatiently. I *had* fancied that when my summons came I should hail it as a sailor the sight of land; I should rejoice as a prisoner at the striking off of his fetters; whereas I felt recklessly, wrathfully defiant. My hold on life grew strong with the clutch of desperation; a fierce thirst for its joy of which I had lived defrauded seemed to consume me.

"Six days more to live? Good. Let them pay me for the years I have lost. I spoke half aloud.

A sighing echo from the raftered roof seemed to reply to me as I threw myself on my bed, where I slept heavily and dreamlessly into the morning.

Christmas Day dawned bright and gladsome.

I thought of my pledge to Sir Thomas, and carefully avoided any appearance of singularity. I joined the church-going party, went round with Ismay, assisting in the distribution of her Christmas gifts; lent a hand at the Rectory Christmas-tree and magic-lantern; and, courageously descending to the drawing-room just as dinner was announced, offered my arm to Miss Fordyce, to her sovereign amazement. She evidently was not going to waste her fine eyes and powers of conversation on me, and, Major Grimshaw being her other neighbour, I was soon relegated to obscurity.

On my other hand sat a young girl of some eighteen or nineteen summers, whom I heard Sir Thomas address as "Miss Bell," in an un-come-out style of dress, with manners to correspond. At least, she was looking down and blushing so violently, when I noticed her, at the remarks of her neighbour that I could not help lending an ear.

"Deed, and ye are joost overpowering to us puir ignorant bodies, Miss Bell. Why, the puir curate laddie was fain to rin away at

your approach; he judged ye wad be treckling him anent his deveenity, and maybe his metapheesics. Hech! hech!" spoke he, in a melodious Glaswegian accent, ending with an exasperating cackling laugh that drew all surrounding eyes on him and his victim. Miss Bell suddenly plucked up a spirit, and turned on him.

"Indeed, Professor McCraw, you are quite mistaken. I know nothing of divinity or metaphysics either; and Mr. Pinkerton knows I don't. He was only asking what I had been reading lately, and I told him where I had got to in the 'History of Our Own Times, and asked what he thought of McCarthy's views of disestablishment," she protested, in a clear, girlish voice.

"And then ye deleevered yourself finely about the land question. Puir Sir Thomas! Ye left him na leg to stand upon. We must have ye in Parliament, Miss Bell."

The girl turned away her head. I could see her eyes were full of tears of mortification, and her voice choked as she tried to reply. I poured her out a glass of water, and she looked at me gratefully.

"You feel the room too hot," I said. "Let me get you some ice."

"It's not that," she said simply. "I was silly and vexed; that was all. It *is* so hard to know what to say to people. I never meant to say anything wrong to Mr. Pinkerton or Sir Thomas, but they were both shocked at me."

"The Rev. Percy Pinkerton *is* easily shocked, I should imagine. Sir Thomas was only pretending," I replied with decision. She looked cheered, and went on.

"I was so glad to meet Professor McCraw. I thought he would have helped me to understand one of his books that I like so much; but he has done nothing but make jokes and try to set everybody laughing at me; and then *I* get into trouble with mamma. She says she wishes I had never been educated at all, sometimes."

"Don't talk to that Scotch brute, then. Let him feed in silence."

"But how can I help it, when he took me in to dinner?"

"Talk to me," was my prompt reply. "There, be quick! He's going to say something else. Here, let us look at this menu card."

"Aw'm thinking——" began the Professor, with a solemn clearing of his throat.

"Don't turn your head," I whispered; "keep steady."

"Aw'm thinking, Miss Bell, it's joost a question o' ——"

"Oh, I *must* listen to him," said Miss Bell, lifting her laughing brown eyes to mine.

"On *no* consideration! Fix your mind on the entrées."

"Miss Bell! d'ye mind ——" But here Miss Bell threw down her menu and fairly burst into a fit of girlish laughter, so utterly disconcerting to the great McCraw that he refused curried oysters in a voice of thunder, and was speechless for the rest of the repast.

"Oh, I'm such an unlucky girl!" sighed my new friend. "I'm

always doing or saying the wrong thing. The frightful scrapes I get into are past telling. I don't know how I shall ever get on in society—and I am to come out next season."

I tried to look brimful of sympathy. She was a frank, fresh slip of a lass, with hair cut short on a well-shaped little head. Light, soft hair that made downy little curls on her white forehead and in the pretty curve of her slender neck behind her ears. Her eyes were brown, and had the full, unconscious gaze of a child.

"I've only been forty-eight hours in this house and I've offended six people at least, and done some dreadful things besides." She ended her confession, and then sank into silent meditation. I left her in peace for ten minutes, after which she suddenly asked my opinion of the Game Laws, which I gave her, and the conversation flowed briskly for the rest of the dinner.

"Oh, must we go!" she exclaimed, as Ismay rose. "I'm so sorry. I wish *you* might take me in to dinner all the time I am here!"

"I will if I can," I promised her, and she departed; leaving gloves, fan, handkerchief and a bracelet on her chair and under the table. All of which I carefully collected.

When we joined the ladies, Miss Bell was at the piano, labouring through a lengthy sonata, which came to a sudden stop on our entrance, as she jumped off the music stool. There was a general protest.

"I can't go on! It's *too* bad. I don't know why I ever began it," she cried.

"Isabel!" exclaimed her mother, with deep reproach. "Can you do *nothing?* She practises three hours a day, Lady Waldron. I insist on it, and yet she says she hates it!"

"I'll sing—if I must do something," cried Isabel. "I like doing that." And she sat down again, and began in a clear, young, pathetic voice—

"A place in thy memory, dearest,
Is all I ask or claim;
To pause and look back when thou hearest
The sound of my name."

"Good-night, Basil," said Ismay to me on parting. "A merry Christmas to you! I *wouldn't* obey my lord and master, and send you in to dinner with the heiress; but you got on very well, nevertheless."

I went off down my corridor with "A place in thy memory, dearest," ringing in my ears; but as I entered my dark, solemn old chamber, all the past day's doings seemed to slip away from me, and I stood face to face with the fact—One day gone; one day nearer the end. Five days more.

I fumed at my own folly and superstition as I made the calculation, but half in jest pursued it. Then, in another day, I ought to leave. I must not die here. I should write to Ismay; and to Clarice a

farewell from her unknown brother. I could leave both letters with Sir Thomas to be delivered this day week, when all was over. The New Year's Eve tableaux and ball would have gone off successfully, I reflected with grim satisfaction, before the news would reach here. How would they take it? That quaint young person with the brown eyes and frank, boyish ways?

Sunday morning, fair and frosty. Growls from the hunting men, jubilations from the skaters, more church going, and then a moorland ramble in a party a dozen strong, up to some point where the next county could be seen—if that were any object.

"Let me walk with you," Miss Bell had asked at starting, with her odd, shy, abrupt manner. Her thick sealskin hid her angles, and her little fur cap brought out the clear, creamy whiteness of her complexion. The sharp north wind kissed two little rose-blooms into her cheeks and made her eyes bright. She looked prettier and more ignorant of the fact than I could have thought possible.

We had reached a fine breezy height, and had come upon an upland pool, already skinned over with thin ice, when she turned to me suddenly.

"Why did you say you should not be here to see me skate?"

"I leave for town to-morrow," I answered shortly.

"Then I lose the only friend I possess in this place," she cried despairingly; "just as I was going to show you I *could* do something decently. I have gone through a good deal from Miss Fordyce since I came, and I *was* in hopes of taking it out of her when we got on the ice together. Do stay and see me do it. The ponds will bear by Tuesday."

There was not a trace of coquetry in her direct glance, only honest regret at losing a good comrade. It was a little thing to do for anyone, so I gave the required promise, and she brightened up forthwith and began chattering cheerily. About the good days of long ago, when she had her brother "Algy" for a companion, and all the fun they had together; when *she* was of no importance whatever, and might learn as she liked, or play as she liked, and "life was worth having."

"And now?" I asked sympathetically, for her voice grew unsteady, and her pretty eyes dropped and then lifted themselves to mine, shining through tears.

"Oh, don't you know? Algy died—and I am the unlucky heiress to the great Carruthers property!"

"*You!* Miss Bell?"

"Yes. Isabel Carruthers; that's my name. Didn't you know? Then I wish I'd never told you!"

What did it matter? Poor little woman, she would pass out of my life like the rest. Meanwhile, if she did care for my gloomy company, it was a small concession to make. So we tramped on briskly, and she told me more about herself and her surroundings; of the nun-

like seclusion in which her anxious mother kept her, except when "Daddy" interfered, and let her run wild, took her out hunting and shooting, and tried to make a good man of business of her; of her secret dread of next season, and her presentation.

"Think of all I have to go through before I marry!" she sighed.

"Marry?" I asked, startled at the incongruousness of the idea.

"I suppose I must, some day," she answered innocently, "after I come out. Mamma has settled that I am to meet him in town. Oh, it's no one in particular. Only someone who will manage the property well and be kind to me, and won't object to being Mr. Carruthers."

She gave her shoulders a shrug, as if to dismiss the subject.

"The New Year's Eve Ball!" she suddenly exclaimed. "Are you not coming back for that? And the tableaux next Friday? You will be here? No! Why, where shall you be?"

Next Friday! It was *too* ghastly. I evaded the question.

"Tell me about your dress. Are you going to act?"

She didn't answer for a moment, and when I looked at her was blushing as redly as when under torture by Professor McCraw.

"I'm to be the Novice in the Guinevere tableaux," she said hastily. "Dress from Worth; plain, but ever so costly."

The subject seemed distasteful, so I dropped it.

I don't remember much of the next two days. They flew past with fearful speed, pleasant beyond anything I could have imagined. I felt the courage of desperation possessing me, and threw myself into all the amusement going, Isabel aiding and abetting me.

On Tuesday came a pile of letters. One from Clarice, the first that I had received since her brief acknowledgment of her wedding present. A loving outburst of delight at the thought of our meeting. She was giving up all other visits, and speeding northwards as fast as possible. Paul had been so kind. He would write himself to me. I was to stay with them; give up India altogether if I liked, and live with them.

I don't mind saying that here I broke down utterly, and cried like a child over the gorgeous be-crested paper, with the scrawly, untidy writing. Paul Van Schendal's letter was kind and brotherly, if somewhat stiff and business-like, and I laid them down with a pang of regret, stronger than anything I believed it was in me to feel.

Here it was; Wednesday; my last day here. I packed my things, wrote a line to Ismay, and rang for Micklethwaite to order the dog-cart. I had fabricated some story of important business in town to excuse my stealing away like a thief in the night—hence to die. I looked at the reflection of myself in my glass with incredulity. I had never felt so young, so strong, so full of the joy of living. What fatality was on my track with silent, hurrying footsteps? Be it what it might, it must not overtake me *here*. Let me be alone to meet my doom, away from the kind hearts that might grieve for me.

"A place in thy memory, dearest," sang a clear voice outside.

Isabel's! I sprang up and hurried down the corridor to the great staircase. She was flying down two steps at a time as she sang. Into the library she flitted. I following.

"You here!" she cried, facing round on me suddenly. "I thought everyone was skating on the mere, and I had the house to myself. I am stopping at home to receive my dear old daddy, you know; and I thought I *had* a chance of being naughty!"

"How?" I asked.

For all answer she skipped on a chair, and flung back the curtain from the well-remembered picture. I started and winced.

"You wretch!" she cried, addressing it. "I wanted a good look at you. You began all my disasters here. You know all about her, don't you, Captain Acton?"

"Yes," I said, absently; "I believe I do."

"Then I wish you'd tell me. I only know it's something very solemn and dreadful, that one mustn't allude to at Broadstone on any consideration. Oh, I *must* tell you! You'll keep my secret, won't you? I was going to wear a beautiful, real old fancy dress at the ball, worn by my own ancestress, Christian Carruthers. You have heard of her? No! Why, it's a bit of English history; but never mind now. I told Lady Waldron about it, and she seemed put out, and at last brought me here and showed me this. I suppose everybody's ancestors dressed like everybody else's," in an aggrieved tone. "But it was very much like my get-up, and she implored me not to wear it. Sir Thomas would be made dreadfully uncomfortable; take it as a bad joke, and I don't know what. In short, it was just one of my blunders, and it ended in my giving up the dress and being made into a judy, just to show off Miss Fordyce." She came to a sudden pause. "That's all."

"No, it isn't," I exclaimed impulsively. "Tell me, did you *never* wear that dress?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" implored the poor girl, putting her hands to her face, and flying to the door.

I got there first—I caught her hands—I begged, besought, implored. I believe she thought I was mad, for she stood shrinking from me, with the white scared look on her face of the portrait above her.

"I don't know what you mean. You are too good and kind—too much of a gentleman, to tease me. If you please, I would rather not say anything about it—unless it is to do some real good."

"Won't you take my word for it that it is?" I pleaded. She nodded assent, and after a moment's consideration, with quite a new manner, grave and dignified, in spite of her trembling lips, began:

"It was another of my blunders. I wanted to show Lady Waldron my dress, and she told me to put it on and come to her room that night. I waited till the house was quiet, and then ran to her sitting-

room where I always used to find her when I stayed here before. But I got bewildered at finding it dark and empty; and hearing Sir Thomas's voice in the passage outside, I knew there was a door into the dressing-room and tried to find it. And so I—I——"

"Frightened somebody else more than he frightened you, I dare say," I added lightly, trying to jest away the poor girl's obvious misery. "How did you escape Sir Thomas?"

"I rushed out again, right into Lady Waldron's arms. When his back was turned for a moment, she pushed me behind the portière of the opposite room without saying a word, and sat down, pretending to write till he was safely shut up in his own room. She was dreadfully annoyed, and made me promise never to tell the story. Very likely that I should, wasn't it? I had all my hair cut off that very night, for fear anybody should have seen me and might recognise me. And now you have made me break my word, and I can't imagine why."

I dropped her hands; I walked away to the window, and stood staring blankly out. So she had been the ghost in my room after all! Was I relieved—thankful? I don't know. I felt too like an utter fool to take account of any other sensation. Micklethwaite and the dog-cart passed outside. Should I go? Should I stay? Whatever I did, I should do it with a bad grace.—And Isabel?

She was standing as I had left her, gazing at me in forlorn dismay, the corners of her mouth twitching piteously.

"My dear! my dear! what a brute I am! *Don't* look like that. You are a good, kind, brave girl, and I owe you an explanation, only—only—what will you think of me when you hear it?"

"Why, you are not afraid of *my* opinion!" she cried, her eyes beginning to brighten again. "Let us cover up the horrid old creature and say nothing more about her for ever, if you like. There! Now for the explanation!"

I sent the dog-cart away and tore up my letters to Clarice and Ismay. Isabel must have her explanation, and here it is. Dare I give it to her? Ismay has followed me from the ball-room and reads it over my shoulder with a kind smile and a sigh.

"Why not accept the omen?" she says. "Perhaps you only misread it. It may have been a summons to a newer and happier life before the Old Year should end that Isabel was sent to bring you. Nay, I will prophecy that it was so. Hark—the bells! Isabel loves you, Basil, and you love her. You have only to accept your happiness. Come to her, and welcome new life and hopes with the New Year."

And led by her kind hand I go.

MRS. GILL'S GHOST.

(I have written this down word for word as it was told me by the friend to whom it happened, altering only one or two proper names. G. B. S.)

WE knocked off work on that Monday morning at twelve o'clock as usual; I know that for certain, because the foundry bell was ringing so loud that I could hardly hear father speak.

"Alf," he says "run down to old Mother Gill's, before you come round to dinner, and ask Morris if he has got me the resin I spoke about last week."

I put on my coat and off I went to Mrs. Gill's shop—about ten minutes' walk: a corner shop it is, with a window each side of the door, which is a swing-door and has glass half-way down.

Morris was Mrs. Gill's assistant; a young man about my own age (I am going on for twenty-one) as lives with her since the death of old Gill, and serves in the shop.

I pushed the swing door as usual, but it was fastened tight and wouldn't move. So I rattled the latch and rapped with my knuckles on the glass.

"Morris is off somewhere, and the old lady has got away at the back of the house," I thought to myself. "If they keep customers waiting in this manner they'll find their takings considerably less at the end of the week."

So I kept on rapping and rattling, and presently I saw the door at the back of the shop open and Mrs. Gill come through, just as if she had stepped downstairs, for the private part of the house lay to the back. She came straight on to the door, and stood facing me with only the glass between us.

"Mrs. Gill," I called, loud enough for her to hear through it, "has Morris got the resin for father that was ordered last Tuesday?"

You see we knew her pretty well, having lived for years in the neighbourhood, and father dealing with her constantly for things we required in our trade. Mrs. Gill took no notice whatsoever of me; no, not as much as if I hadn't been there at all, blocking out the daylight on the outside of the glass door. Indeed, she never even met my eyes, but continued to look up into the air as if she were examining the ceiling; and I craned my neck to see, too, what attracted her.

But I could see nothing, for the shop inside was quite dim, and gets its light chiefly from the door, which, as I say, I was blocking up with my body. The windows are pretty full of goods and not over-clean. The oddest thing of all was a strange kind of light which began to show upon her face, as she held it with the chin tilted

towards me: it was as if a trap-door was opened in the roof of the shop, and light was falling down on her head. You will say, perhaps, that that was the light coming through the glass above my head in the door. Well, it may have been; for I'm not much more than five foot five in height, and the door is a tall, narrow one; but I don't think it was that, myself.

All this while, I must tell you, I wasn't a bit frightened, and I hammered at the door and shouted at the old woman till I was tired and angry. She didn't look any different from usual, having her cap on and her red and black shawl crossed over her shoulders, as I had seen her hundreds of times; and, except for the way she disregarded me, and looked up in the air as if she didn't know I was there and trying to get in, she seemed quite herself. So at last, as she moved back into the shop, I gave the door a last thump, and called out: "You may wait a good while for my custom, Mother Gill!" and went back to my dinner.

Father was a bit annoyed at not getting the resin, but he managed without it for the time. He laughed a good bit at my standing one side of the door and the old lady the other, looking at each other. Only, as I explained to him, she didn't ever look at me, but had her mind full of something else, and that something, I says, "was a crack or a trap in her ceiling!"

So the matter dropped.

On Thursday of that week father and I came through Roper Street, where Mrs. Gill's shop was, together; and father says, "We'll look in on Morris, and tell him the resin isn't wanted now; he's lost his chance this time."

So we walked along to Gill's corner, and there was a crowd of people and a hearse standing waiting.

"Who's dead?" asked father. As for me, I couldn't say a word, for all of a sudden I had come over quite sick and faint, I couldn't tell why.

"Old Mother Gill," said Meadows, the shoemaker, two doors off. "Found dead on her bed on Monday morning, when Morris went up about nine o'clock. Generally, she came down and got the breakfast; but as time went on and she didn't come, he called, and then went up, and found her stone cold on her bed. She must have laid down in her clothes on the Sunday night, and never moved again."

"What day was you here, Alf?" says father, in a low voice, to me.

"Monday, at twelve o'clock," I answers. Meadows went on. "Morris he fetched a doctor, and he said life was quite extinguished. And they locked up the house, and Morris went over to Holloway and brought back Charlotte and her husband—that was Charlotte Gill—and they come in about two o'clock. I hear they're going to keep on the business."

"Didn't they leave no one with the corpse?" I heard father as

I couldn't have asked it myself at that minute to save my life, but I was deadly anxious for the answer.

"There weren't anyone to leave," Meadows said, apologising rather, for many people think a deal of watching a corpse. "You see no one lives in the house, and Morris being an orphan had no one to put in, and there was everything laying about just as she'd a-left it on Sunday, so that it was better just to lock the place up and take the key over to Charlotte, as could act exactly as she pleased, being left sole executioner."

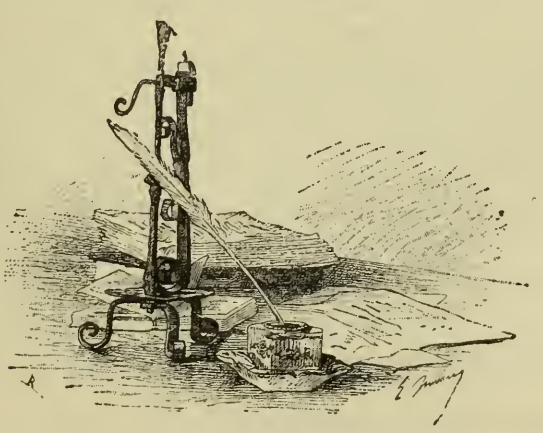
So between the hours of eleven and two on that Monday (allowing full time for the doctor's visit, and Morris' start for Holloway) there was no one in the house but the dead woman!

Just then the coffin was carried out of the glass door, and put into the hearse, and the mourners followed in a mourning carriage, and the procession started. The shop door stood open, and father and I went in with one or two others and looked round, for the place was left in charge of a caretaker for the afternoon. But what I specially looked for, there wasn't a sign of: no trap-door nor hole in the ceiling through which the light could have shone down. Indeed, directly I heard of her death, I didn't expect it.

Father asked a few questions, especially what the old lady was found in. "No, she hadn't undressed," I heard the caretaker saying; "she had her cap on as usual, and her little plaid shawl about her shoulders."—That was just what I expected, too.

That is the exact story of how I saw Mrs. Gill's Ghost. I'd heard plenty of talk about apparitions and spirits and such like, but I hadn't given them much heed until I saw this myself. I can't help believing in them now. And though I wasn't frightened at the time, I don't want to see no more of them.

G. B. Stuart.



THE MISSING RUBIES.

By Sarah Doudney.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE STORY OF THE NECKLACE.

THERE, in their nest of faded white satin, lay the rubies, sparkling fiery red in the morning sunshine.

There were only four persons in the room who did not at once come forward to look at them. The Count and Godwin remained in their places; the veiled woman did not stir; and Caroline stayed on her couch. But Olga, breaking from her mother's hold, ran up to the table with irrepressible curiosity. Even Mr. Corder peeped at them over Jane's shoulder, and Miss Lindrick stood by Dorothy's side to get a good view. There were many exclamations of wonderment and admiration, but at last Dorothy's clear old voice was heard above them all.

"The stones look even brighter than they did," she said. "But where is the pendant? There used to be a sort of Maltese cross. It has been taken away."

Mr. Burnett again stepped forward, and laid a second open case upon the table. This time there was a general cry of astonishment. Olga laid hands upon the contents of the second case in great excitement.

"This is our lost necklace!" she said, joyously. "Mamma, do come and see! Here it is, pendant and all. Not a stone is missing. I have had it on my neck a dozen times, and I should know it anywhere."

"Come, Caroline, and identify your property," called Canon Earle, raising his voice and looking towards the couch in the corner.

The Countess rose, slowly and unwillingly, and dragged herself up to the group at the table. She looked at the second necklace with eyes that were strangely dull, and spoke in a listless tone.

"Yes; that is mine," she said briefly.

"But," began Dorothy in a puzzled voice, "I thought that this necklace, which Mr. Burnett first showed us, was Count Gliska's!"

"I see I must go on with my explanation," said the quiet jeweller, with a smile. "I left off with Count Gradizoff's visit to my shop. It was, as I have said, the necklace with the initials on the clasp that he wished to sell. As I have also said, I recognised it at once; and Count Gradizoff explained that it had come into his possession through the political difficulties of its first owner. He asked three

thousand pounds for the necklace. But I answered that, being imperfect, it was not worth that sum. Its pendant was missing. That pendant was shaped like a heart, and had a large ruby, of great value, in the middle. Without the pendant I could not give more than fifteen hundred pounds. The Count was disappointed, but he agreed to accept my offer. And so the bargain was concluded; and just before we parted he came out with rather a singular question."

Here Burnett paused, and glanced at Godwin, who made him a quick sign to go on. Caroline turned away from the table, and went slowly back to her corner.

"He asked whether it would be a very difficult and costly task to make an imitation of the necklace. I told him that there was no need for that. I had a necklace in my possession, in garnets, evidently made from the Gliska design. A jeweller, of course, would detect the imposture at once; but anyone else—a lady, for instance—would not be so quick-sighted. The most striking difference was in the pendants; but the Gliska pendant had disappeared. He bought the garnet necklece, and went away with it. About a year later I chanced to hear of his death; and there, I thought, the story had ended."

A second time the speaker paused. And this time it was Gliska who signed to him to go on.

"Some months after the Russian Count's death," he continued, "a lady, in widow's weeds, entered my shop, and announced herself as the Countess Gradizoff. She had come to dispose of the Gliska necklace, valued at three thousand pounds! I need not say that the necklace she produced was that which she has already identified as her property. Nor need I dwell on her disappointment when I explained that her late husband had deceived her. She departed, and I never saw her again until I met her in this room to-day."

Caroline remained motionless on her couch, shielding her face with one hand. The others were still grouped round the table.

"Another year went by," said the jeweller, "and then I had a visit from Count Gliska himself, then known as Mr. Vordenberg. His object was to dispose of some of the jewels that still remained to him, and devote the proceeds to the relief of his distressed countrymen. Naturally enough, I showed him the necklace, explaining how it had come into my hands. And it is at his desire that I am here to tell my story to-day."

Burnett had told his tale, simply and straightforwardly; and at its close he stepped back quietly into the shade. There was a moment's pause; and then the strange lady came forward, now without her veil.

Olga stared at her in amazement; Dorothy and Jane looked at her with some vague remembrance of her face. But her old pupil was the first to recognise her and give her a name.

"You are Paulina Lorenski; but you are very much changed,

and ever so much prettier," she said, running up quickly to kiss her.

Madame Valerot turned hastily away from the young face; tears rose to her soft brown eyes, but she spoke calmly.

"I must not kiss you, Olga; I am a very wicked woman. I have come here to-day to confess my sin, and make such atonement as I can for all the wrong I have done. It was I who stole the necklace from Mr. Earle's box, believing it to be a thing of great value. One evening, while he was sitting in yonder room with Miss Lindrick, I drugged his coffee. Do you remember," she added, appealing suddenly and sharply to Alma, "how careful I was to give him the cup that had no cream in it?"

"I do remember," Alma answered, with a flush. Her eyes met Godwin's eyes as she spoke, and he smiled kindly. Kindly, that was all.

"He slept soundly that night. His door was unlocked; I entered his room unheard, hunted up his keys, and stole the necklace. Afterwards I found that I had committed a useless crime. The late Count Gradizoff had never given Count Gliska's rubies to his wife. The thing that I stole I have come to restore. It only remains for me to beg that the Countess will pardon me, as her nephew has already done."

"Oh, I dare say mamma will forgive you," said Olga, breaking an awkward silence. "As the rubies were not real, you didn't do anything so very bad after all. I can't imagine what papa could have been thinking of when he sold the true necklace! Of course it was very wicked of you not to speak sooner, Paulina. It is your fault that we have all been so dreadfully unkind to poor Cousin Godwin."

The girl's frank and simple speech had the effect of loosening other tongues. Canon Earle was the first to turn to Godwin with a few candid words of affectionate regret. Dorothy and Jane followed, the latter weeping. Then came the Colonel and old Redburn, who was less surly than he had intended to be. Alma stole up to her old lover with a handkerchief in her hand, and genuine tears in her pale blue eyes.

"You can never forgive me, I know," she whispered.

"Indeed, I can," he answered, rather cruelly. "It was all for the best." Suddenly Dorothy, still a little bewildered, looked around in search of Caroline. But the Countess had made her escape through the back drawing-room, and was safe upstairs in her own room.

Good-byes followed. Miss Earle entreated Godwin and his friends to stay to luncheon. Mr. Corder, however, had already ordered luncheon at the Railway Hotel; and so they all departed, carrying the Canon off with them. But before he went he found time to whisper a few words in Dorothy's ear.

"It is Caroline who is the real culprit," he said. "She has coolly defrauded us of three thousand pounds."

The house seemed strangely silent after they were all gone. By mutual consent the two sisters went out into the old garden for fresh air and repose.

They walked slowly down one of the long paths, where thick boughs met and embraced over their heads, and bees were humming and butterflies fluttering all round them. They knew the path well. It was here that they had run races when they were merry little girls. It was here that they had sauntered, arm-in-arm, to confide to each other those shadowy love affairs which had never taken shape and substance. And it was here that they had watched Godwin, a very small boy with a tiny barrow, going cheerfully along to his own garden at the bottom of the grounds.

It is a true saying that—

> "In the garden grows
> More than the gardener sows."

Memories spring up there, thick as pansies. Sorrows grow among the roses and lilies. Hopes go climbing among the honeysuckles, shooting out tendrils on all sides, and withering, often enough, before the summer is half over. As the prim old sisters walked along that favourite path, they were both conscious that their thoughts had gone straying back into the past.

"What are we going to do about Caroline?" Dorothy asked at last. "How shall we go on living with her year after year? Do you think that we can ever forget this mean deception that she has practised upon us? Even now I can hardly believe that she knew what she did!"

"I am afraid she did know," said Jane, slowly and sadly.

"Yes, yes; of course she did. But it was so base, so sordid. What a handsome girl she used to be! and how proud we were of her when she married Count Gradizoff! Oh, Jane, if she had wanted money, why could she not have said so plainly? Do you remember the crafty way in which she hinted that the value of the necklace should be the price of her silence? For her child's sake, she said, not for her own, the loss must be made good."

"Even the meanness is not the worst of it!" cried Jane, suddenly bursting into tears. "Think of the cruel suspicion that she fastened upon our poor boy! I believe she knew from the first that he was innocent. I dare say she always thought that little Lorenski had been the real thief! Oh, Dorothy, Dorothy, she can't be really an Earle; she must have got into our family somehow by mistake! Let us tell her to go away!"

"Perhaps she won't wait to be told," the elder woman said thoughtfully. "I hardly think she will want to stay here and face the Lindricks. She is paid back in her own coin indeed. Count Gliska has not spared her."

A sound of hasty steps flying along the walk startled them both.

It was Olga, who came running after them with a scared face and wide eyes.

"What does all this mean, Aunt Dorothy?" she asked, breathlessly. "Mamma is heaping all our things into boxes, and saying that we are going away. Why must we go? I am very happy here. I want to stay. And why is everything to be done in such a dreadful hurry?"

"Your mother must answer your questions, Olga," said Dorothy, with a heavy sigh.

"But she won't answer. She goes on packing in the wildest way. And her face looks very white and strange. Aunt Dorothy, if she goes, may I not stay here? I will be very good, and not give you any trouble."

"You have already given us trouble," said Dorothy, sharply. "If it had not been for you, the affair of the necklace would never have been known to the Lindricks, and we should have been spared a great deal of unnecessary disgrace. Yes, and poor Godwin would not have had to endure such insults from that violent old coffee man! No, Olga; as your mother is going, it will be best for all that you should go too."

Miss Gradizoff, bellowing out her grief in loud sobs, ran back to the house, and the sisters slowly followed. They were immensely relieved. Caroline was about to deliver them from the burden of her presence, and they would be left to end their days in peace.

Canon Earle came back after luncheon in time to be present at the Countess's leave-taking. Very few words were said. Caroline preserved a haughty demeanour to the last, and persisted steadily in posing as a deeply injured woman.

"Good-bye, Caroline," said the Canon, escorting her to the carriage with his usual high-bred courtesy. "With regard to the sum paid to you for the necklace, it will be as well just to mention that we shall be quite willing, of course, to receive it by instalments. You are going up to town *en route* for St. Petersburg? Good-bye again. God bless you."

Olga was too sulky even to look at her uncle; and her mother did not return his parting benediction.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"OLD FRIENDS, OLD SCENES."

WEDDING preparations were going on steadily in Wimpole Street. The little Wyvilles were already provided with a new governess; and their mother's mind was entirely occupied with a mysterious event—the sudden disappearance of Madame Valerot.

The widow overwhelmed Harriet with questions, but Harriet had

nothing of importance to tell. She could only say that Madame had suddenly announced that she must go, and had given no reason for this abrupt departure. All her accounts had been satisfactorily settled, and she had gone her way without taking leave of anyone. Neither letter nor message had been left for Mrs. Wyville; she had not even said a word of good-bye to Mrs. Milton, and there was not the slightest clue to her whereabouts. But Count Gliska, if he had cared to speak, might have put Mrs. Wyville on the right track to discover her missing friend.

Not so very far away from Wimpole Street the trees in a certain walled garden were beautiful with the green of summer. Under the trees there were flowers and grass; and women in serge gowns and white coiffes went quietly up and down the paths sometimes. The high walls screened the garden from the gaze of the outer world; and the great house, standing in its grounds, was carefully protected from prying eyes. Now and then the school-girls, on the other side of the road, could catch glimpses of the nuns from their upper windows. But they never saw the faces hidden under that strange head-gear, and never heard the voices of those who had sought refuge in that guarded retreat.

One of those faces, no longer blooming, still kept the charm of soft brown eyes, and a certain innocent, wistful look. But few would have recognised Madame Valerot in the pale *religieuse*, who was the most silent woman in that abode of silence. Peace had come to her with penitence; she had ceased to desire the things that she had given up for ever. This still life, which had seemed so terrible to her in her restless youth, was all that she wanted now. The school-girls, always given to making up romantic stories about the nuns, little knew that the eventful history of one of them was stranger than any of their dreams. Paulina Lorenski and gay Madame Valerot—these women had had their day; and pale Sister Mary, going through her daily duties and austerities, sometimes wondered whether she had ever known them. She did not suffer her mind to dwell upon the bygone days, but set her thoughts to the tune of the chapel bell, and was content with her lot.

These summer hours, that went by for some in a monotonous calm, were too short for Harriet and Beatrice.

There was so much to be done, and everybody was so slow in doing it—that was what Harriet was always saying. The work-people, engaged to set the Kensington villa in order, seemed to go crawling through their tasks; and Beatrice and Godwin changed their minds so often about the furniture that Harriet lost patience with them both. They developed peculiar artistic tastes which drove her to distraction; and they haunted old curiosity shops until Mrs. Milton hated the sight of china monsters and queer cups and saucers.

But, in the eyes of Mr. Corder, everything that they did was wise

and right. He would listen with deep interest to Godwin's long histories of Wedgwood bowls and ancient teapots, and he spent hours in studying rich stuffs of quaint pattern, which were to be converted into draperies and curtains. These young people, with their fantastic ideas, never wearied him for a moment. Here were two lives to be made happy, and it was his part to surround them with all the things they craved for.

The Kensington house was large, and two rooms could very well be spared to an old man who wanted to feel the sunshine that the young shed around them. Moreover, the pair could not endure the thought of his solitary life any longer. They had both learnt to call him father, and consulted him about all that they did or thought of doing. In their life he had begun to live anew. A little while ago he had been thinking only of the end of his pilgrimage; now he found it in his heart to desire a long sojourn on this side of the mystic river.

At this time Godwin paid a second visit to Fairbridge, and slept one night in his old room at Meadow House.

Dorothy and Jane were supremely happy in his company. And with their own delicate old hands they packed up certain treasures that had belonged to his grandfather, and insisted that he should carry them back to his new home.

"We cannot do all that we want to do for you, dear boy," said Dorothy regretfully. "You know how shamefully Caroline has defrauded us. It is a hard word to use; and we feel that we would rather not talk much about her doings. But your uncle—well, your uncle likes money, and he can't forgive her."

"I am in no need of money, Aunt Dorothy," said Godwin, kissing the old woman's waxen cheek. "We shall be quite contented, Beatrice and I, if you will let us come to see you sometimes."

"Let you come!" Dorothy spoke with unwonted animation. "Why, we shall love to have you here. Once upon a time I thought that I could never take kindly to any niece but Alma. But Beatrice won our hearts before we knew anything about your attachment."

"And how indignant she was because we had been misled!" cried Jane, with tearful eyes. "Some day I will tell you how she talked to me on the bridge, and confessed her love for you. But I can't speak of these things at present; they are sure to make me cry."

"There really is nothing to cry about, Jane," said Dorothy reprovingly. "When *will* you try to overcome your emotional impulses? No one is too old to improve; and if—if in time to come—we should be deeply interested in the management of certain young olive branches, it will be necessary to set them an example of perfect self-control."

"You will both set them examples of perfect breeding and goodness," declared Godwin; and Jane kissed him to hide her pretty old blushes. She wondered how Dorothy could have said such a thing.

The mention of the old bridge had reminded Godwin that it was

FRANK DADD. R. TAYLOR

SOME ONE WALKING ALONG THE BEACH AT THAT MOMENT, HEARD THE LAUGHTER AND CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE HAPPY GROUP.

his favourite haunt in boyhood; and he already knew that Beatrice had loved the spot for his sake. He had decided not to leave Fairbridge till afternoon; and there was time to walk to the bridge before luncheon.

There were few changes in the place; the moss cushions seemed to have thickened on the grey stone work, but the song of the stream was as sweet and glad as it had ever been. He stood still, leaning his arms on the parapet and gazing down into the rushing tide.

That bright, swift flow of water had all its old fascination for the gazer. He remembered the last time that he had ever stood here, and thought that all the joys of life were swept from him like the fallen leaves that the current carried away. And now it seemed that they were not joys, but sorrows that the stream was sweeping out of sight. Doubts, perplexities, anxieties—all were taken out of his heart, and borne off to some unknown sea which would never give them back. Heaven was kind; love had clasped him by the hand, and all the world was fair and new.

While he mused, watching the drifting leaves and ever-shifting lights and shadows, a light step was drawing near to his side. And presently a well-remembered voice, a little tremulous, pronounced his name.

"Alma!" he said, turning round and confronting her. "I didn't expect to meet you in this lonely old place. I came here to get a glimpse of one of my old haunts before I go back to town."

"Then you are going back to-day, Godwin? You don't stay long."

He looked down at Alma and wondered at the change that had come over her aspect. Everybody and everything else in the old home had seemed wonderfully unaltered; Miss Lindrick alone was showing plain signs of a premature decay. It was not that she looked as if she were going to die—it was likely that she might live as long as (perhaps even longer than) other people; but it would always be a dry, flowerless life, hardly worth living at all.

It is a strange fact that many women who have lived a troubled life and suffered deeply retain much of the freshness of youth, while their more prosperous sisters fade early. There are those who fail, and yet no less—

"Bear up beneath their unsuccess,"

and even, in some fashion, rise above their shattered hopes and vainly-lavished loves. These are the women who grow young at the sound of a child's laugh; who are made glad by such a common thing as a rose or a sunbeam; who wear what Browning calls a "glory-garland round the soul." They may have worn faces and sad eyes; but who has not noticed that indescribable youthfulness which comes into such faces and suddenly transforms them?

Alma Lindrick had passed from childhood to girlhood and from girlhood to womanhood without once experiencing any intense suffer-

ing. She had, perhaps, loved Godwin Earle better than anyone else in the world; he was a part of the morning of her life; and yet she had resolutely banished him from that life, and lived on tranquilly enough without him But, tranquil as she had been, she had begun to show the marks of advancing age. An existence steadily devoted to self-interest is a tame affair at the best, and weariness is a greater foe to woman's beauty than sorrow. It was a pinched and withered Alma who stood confronting Godwin in the sunshine, and looking up at him with an unusual wistfulness in her glance.

How strange it seems to stand face to face with an old love after the spell is broken! It is an experience that comes to most of us in the course of our lives, the world being such a small place that we cannot hope to escape altogether from each other. Suddenly, at some unexpected corner, the man encounters his old goddess, shorn now of all vestige of divinity, and finds himself marvelling at the bygone infatuation. Can this be the very idol at whose shrine he offered up his best gifts? How is the fine gold become dim? The old charm that lurked in every look and tone and gesture, whither has it fled? And the woman who, after long years, meets again the hero of her early dreams, is astonished at her own indifference. There is a curious consciousness of having outlived her affections, and a strange lack of sympathy with her former self. Is this indeed the being who claimed all her thoughts and hopes and prayers? The parting with him had been as the rending of limb from limb, an anguish that had left her spent and crushed for many a day. And now she can greet him calmly, and go her way without even a quickening of the pulse or a passing sigh.

The death of feeling is a merciful thing. If our feelings never perished, our lives would surely be a prolonged agony; we should embrace dead branches with the living fibres of the heart. Some thoughts of this kind were in Godwin's mind when he stood and looked at his old sweetheart.

"No," he answered, "I don't stay long; I am wanted in town. You know I am a business man nowadays, and can't afford to take many holidays."

"I can never fancy you associating yourself with business," she said, resting one thin little hand on the edge of the parapet. "I always think of you as you used to be in the old days."

"Waiting for something to turn up?" he smiled. "I assure you I was very uncomfortable in my state of patrician laziness."

Uncomfortable in the time when she was his constant companion! Had he forgotten their daily meetings in the shrubbery that divided the grounds of Meadow House from Oak Lodge? And those moonlight strolls in the old chestnut avenue? It is always hard for a woman to realise that a man possesses an unlimited power of forgetting. Through his life there verily flows that river of Lethe whose waters she has often sighed for in vain.

"Happy people never look back, I suppose," she said, stifling little sigh. "Everything is going well with you now, is it not?"

"Yes; and with you too, I hope."

"One can't be very cheerful when someone is lying dangerously ill in the house. You have heard that Mr. Redburn is dying?"

"No," said Godwin gravely. "I am sorry to hear it. And your home must be sad, of course. I'm afraid all this gloom is very bad for you."

"I am depressed," she admitted; "and I came here just because I thought I should meet nobody. One grows tired of endless inquiries and condolences. People seem to fancy that because he is dying in our house he will leave us all his money. It is too absurd!"

"I hope he will." Godwin spoke earnestly. "He is a lonely man, and no one will be defrauded if he does."

"Not even Miss Ward?" asked Alma, with a quick glance. "She has the first claim. He promised to make her his heiress."

"She absolves him from that promise. I shall have enough, now, for her and myself. We don't want anything from Mr. Redburn."

While he was speaking, Alma could scarcely recognise the Godwin of old days. Earle had straightened himself haughtily, and was looking down upon her with stern eyes.

"Well, he may rally," she said, glancing away from the face that had no tender expression for her now. "I was always sorry for all that he made you and Miss Ward suffer; but we could not control him."

"Thank you for being sorry, Alma, but the suffering is over. The aunts will scold me if I keep luncheon waiting; so good-bye."

"Good-bye." She gave him her hand without meeting his eyes again, and, lifting his hat, he turned away from the bridge.

For a little while Alma remained standing on the spot that he had just left, and looked down (as he had done) into the hurrying tide. The same accompaniment may do duty for many songs, and the thoughts that Alma set to the water-music were very unlike Godwin's happy musings. She had ceased to expect much joy from life, although she was almost sure of wealth. Her father had no doubt about Mr. Redburn's will; the future lay before her like a wide expanse of green pastures and still waters, but it was a monotonous outlook. She did not want it changed; she told herself that she was perfectly satisfied, and yet this brief interview with her old lover had revived the dream of her youth.

Miss Lindrick was not, as we know, a romantic woman; but as she, too, turned away from the bridge, certain half-forgotten fragments of poetry came drifting into her mind. The country was bathed in the still sunshine of ripe summer: the foliage of the woods

was dark and full : all the shadows were deep, and all the lights clear and strong. It was a day that filled the heart with thoughts of old summers, of bygone rambles under as blue a sky, of honeysuckle gathered by hands that will never offer us a flower again. To most of us, let us be ever so prosaic, there comes, on these rich warm days, a perfume from the past.

Alma let herself into the grounds of Oak Lodge by a side entrance, and then sat down, half wearily, on a seat under one of the trees. From this spot she could overlook the long paths winding through the red rose bushes and see the ivy-grown gables of Meadow House ; and there came into her head two lines of Owen Meredith which Godwin had repeated long ago :

> "There's not a flower, there's not a tree, in this old garden where we sit,
> But what some fragrant memory is closed and folded up in it."

Well, it was evident that he had done with memories. Next summer she should see him sauntering along the terrace of his old home, his arm round his wife's waist, his face wearing a look of settled content. She almost determined, then and there, to persuade the Colonel to let Oak Lodge and go abroad.

"Alma," said her father's voice, suddenly breaking in upon her reverie. "Alma, where are you ?"

"Here," she answered, springing up from her seat. "I only came out for half an hour to get a little fresh air. Has anything happened ?"

"Something *has* happened, indeed !" The Colonel stood before her, paler and graver than she had ever seen him. "He is dead ; he died a few minutes ago in my arms. And he told me, just at the last, that he had left everything to you."

Alma sank down again on the seat under the tree, and pressed her hand upon her heart. Neither father nor daughter had felt much love for the old man who was gone ; but now that he had left them he had become, for a moment, almost dear. His last words had proved his affection for a woman who had given him nothing beyond dutiful attentions. Alma was smitten with a sudden sense of regret, and a sort of self-contempt for her own shallowness of heart.

But she rallied quickly, and got up again, looking pale but calm. Then she put her hand within her father's arm, and began to lead him slowly down one of the long paths.

"You must take care of your health, papa," she said. "All shocks are very bad ; I think you had better have a little of the doctor's advice. As soon as everything is settled we will get away from Fairbridge. Poor dear Mr. Redburn ! I did not think the end was so near."

Already she had begun to feel the importance of her new position, and was assuming a little protecting air towards the Colonel. He did

not resent her manner in the least. In the future he could see himself a submissive old man, following his daughter's lead for the rest of his life, and jogging along, comfortably enough, to his final goal.

It is a mistake to suppose that people never realise their heart's desire—that the thing you most long for is the very thing that you are certain not to have. Alma was now a real heiress; she was mistress of such a fortune as she had always sighed to possess. Nor had the good luck come when it was too late in life to enjoy it; although old for her years, Miss Lindrick was still young. And yet—and yet, as she moved slowly along the path, she could not help wondering how all this prosperity would have looked if Godwin had been her lover still!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PENDANT.

THE quiet wedding was over, and the little party were all gathered in the Miltons' sitting-room, where Beatrice was standing, the centre of the admiring group. She had dispensed with bridesmaids; Godwin had received his bride from Mr. Milton's hands, and Harriet and Mr. Corder had looked on. This young couple, abundantly satisfied with each other, had wanted no bridal pomp, and Beatrice was quite content to be admired by her own people and no one else.

They were still grouped round her, saying a hundred foolish and loving things, all talking together in low tones, while she, with eyes shining through tears, clasped first one hand and then another, and then turned back to her husband with the sweet shy look that he knew and loved so well. The room was gay with flowers that made a background of bright colours for the white figure of the bride. And Count Gliska, as he softly opened the door, received an impression of bloom and light and sweetness which he never forgot.

Just for a second or two he stood in the doorway, and then Beatrice saw him, and moved towards him with a little cry of welcome. Godwin followed, and together they gently drew him in and made him one of them.

"I was afraid I should not see you before I went away," said Beatrice, with her hand still resting on his arm. "And oh, Count, we are feeling to-day, more than ever, that you have cleared our path and led us straight to happiness! Don't think us ungrateful because we haven't said very much. You know that our hearts are full."

"I shall never think anything that is not kind," Gliska answered, letting his eyes dwell for a moment on her sweet face. "And the truth is that I am your debtor. Your hand first unlocked the cell in which I had shut myself up with my fancies and memories; you let in the sunshine of the outer world, and revived my interest in the life of to-day. The poor recluse thanks you, Beatrice. It would be well if every morbid soul could have as sweet a visitant. I have

learnt that it is better even to bear new sorrows than to brood perpetually over the old."

"I, too, have learnt that lesson," said old Corder in his quiet voice. "I do not believe that the 'herb called heart's-ease' grows in solitary places. It is found in the beaten paths, trodden daily by weary feet; it is gathered by the wayside where the Samaritan finds his wounded brother."

So spoke the old merchant, and everyone knew that the words came straight from his heart. Godwin, remembering a certain long story once told in the twilight, glanced at him with a look that could be well understood.

There was a brief pause, broken by Gliska, who turned again to the bride with a smile.

"I have kept my wedding gift till the wedding was over," he said, drawing a small morocco case from his breast. "But before you see it, Beatrice, I must once more recall your mind to the story of the necklace. You have not forgotten that the pendant of the true necklace was missing?"

"No, I have not forgotten," she replied.

"In my youth," he continued, speaking in a voice so calm and sweet that it fell like music on the ear—"in my youth I did not care to see my love bedecked with jewels. I had plenty to give her; but she was a girl, and gems do not become early girlhood. The ruby necklace had been worn by my mother and grandmother; but it seemed too splendid a thing for Sofie's slender throat. But the heart which formed the pendant, *that* she could wear; it was a fitting gift from her lover—a type of that heart, red with life-blood, which throbbed for her alone."

Again there was a momentary pause; no one moved; Beatrice had grown pale, and stood listening with dilated eyes fixed upon the speaker.

"I left her at my house in Warsaw," he went on, "and started on a short journey, taking the pendant with me. A friend of mine, living at some distance, had told me that he wished to dispose of an antique gold chain, and give the proceeds to our distressed countrymen. I went to his house, bought the chain, to which I affixed the heart, and then set out on my return. You know the end of the tale—you know that I was met on the way home, and told of all that had been done in my absence."

There was a deep murmur from his hearers. The bride drew nearer, and her blue eyes mutely entreated him to spare himself. But he met the wistful glance with perfect calmness.

"In all my many trials, in all the wanderings of my exile, I have kept this jewel hidden in my breast. No poverty could induce me to part with it; for years I have treasured it as the last link between me and the dead. But now—now, Beatrice, I would fain feel that it is a link between the living and me; the dead are waiting for me in

heaven; and you, my living friend and sister, will cheer me while I have to stay on earth. Heart of gold, your worth is far above rubies!"

He took out of the case a short chain of ancient make, from which was suspended the ruby heart of the Gliska necklace. As the light touched it the jewel glowed like wine; its solemn splendour drew all eyes upon it; and Beatrice, still pale, received it with a trembling hand.

What had she done to deserve of God a brighter lot than hers for whom this gift was destined first? As she looked deep into the rich hues of the precious thing, she thought of those old legends which told that gems were sometimes the abode of spirits, and by their aid the future was revealed to the gazer. Was not a deep-tinted stone like this the sardius of the high priest's breastplate? What if there were indeed some mystic power lurking in this ancient jewel, fashioned by hands that had long ceased to labour? A sudden sunbeam, striking on the great ruby, kindled it to wonderful glory, like—

"The central fire at the sphere's heart bound."

And the blue eyes, gazing into its depths, turned timidly away, and sought the face they loved best to rest upon.

"It is well," said Gliska gently. "I could not have given the jewel to any woman who would value it less for its worth's sake. For such baubles some have sacrificed love, honour, religion—all that is dearest in this world and the next. You need not fear to wear my ruby, Beatrice. If any spirits are housed therein, they are spirits of light and truth; they can show you nothing but love here, and bliss hereafter."

"She has no fears," said Godwin, taking the chain and clasping it round her neck with his own hands. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her; and the ruby heart shall rest above the heart of gold."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HAPPY DAYS.

THE winter passed happily enough to the young couple and the old man in the Kensington villa.

Summer came again, and in June Godwin took his wife to Fairbridge, and the aunts received her with open arms. In the sweet evenings, when the perfumes from the garden were mingled with the scent of the hay-fields, the pair (lovers still) sauntered together along the terrace, just as Alma had seen them in fancy. But there was no one to watch their bliss with envious eyes. Oak Lodge was tenanted by strangers; the Lindricks were abroad, and it was doubtful whether they would ever revisit their old home.

"I think Alma must have felt her wealth to be quite a burden," said Jane Earle one day. "She looked years older after the money came to her. All at once she seemed to become a withered woman —like one of my roses nipped by the east wind! And there was something proud and peevish in her manner."

"She was very unlike the Alma that we used to know," remarked Dorothy.

"The Alma Godwin used to be so much in love with," said Jane, with her mind fixed on the past.

"Oh, that was a long, long time ago, Jane," cried the elder sister in a reproving tone. "And we all know that second thoughts are best, and so is second love."

The husband and wife laughed outright. Aunt Dorothy's fear of hurting somebody's feelings was amusing.

"Dear aunty," said Beatrice tenderly, "I wish everyone was as considerate as you are. But it doesn't distress me to feel that I was not the first tenant of Godwin's heart. I have only had one love myself, but I am not jealous of the past. To be loved perfectly and entirely in the present, that is all that a woman wants."

"Then you have got all you want, my dear; I am sure of that," replied Dorothy, stroking the girl's soft cheek.

They were sitting in the drawing-room, waiting for the summons to dinner. The glass doors were open, that the soft air might bring the breath of flowers into the quiet old room. Beatrice was wearing a pale blue gown, and had a bunch of Jane's Gloire de Dijon roses in her bodice. Round her throat was the antique gold chain, and the evening light struck brightly on the ruby heart.

"Look," said Godwin, calling the old ladies' notice to the jewel. "This heart was Count Gliska's wedding gift. Gradizoff got possession of the necklace, but the pendant was safe in Gliska's keeping. I don't think Aunt Caroline Gradizoff would be able to endure the sight of my wife's keepsake!"

The sisters examined the heart with great interest and delight. And then their thoughts turned, naturally enough, to the absent Countess, whose sojourn in Meadow House had brought such discomfort to them all.

"We have had one or two short letters from Caroline," said Dorothy, with a sigh. "She says she is very sorry that she cannot pay back any of our money at present. Jane and I take it patiently; but your uncle, Godwin, is by no means a patient man where money is concerned: and lately he has heard strange tales of Caroline."

"What tales?" Godwin asked.

"Well, he is told that she has been seen playing at Monaco. We hope it is not true; it seems dreadful to think that an Earle could ever be a gambler. And we used to be so proud of Caroline when she was young; she was very handsome."

"Never half as good-looking as you and Aunt Jane and poor Aunt Grace," declared Godwin warmly. "You always made too much of her, dear aunty, and let her ride rough-shod over everybody. Anyway, whether she pays you or not, it is a good thing to have got rid of her."

"Poor Grace," whispered Jane, wiping away a tear. "If it had not been for Caroline——"

"Bygones must be bygones," interposed Dorothy quickly. "I will say, my dear boy, that I was surprised to find Mr. Corder so presentable. He is really quite a gentlemanly old man. We should be glad to see him here again."

"I don't think he will come again to Fairbridge," Godwin said in a quiet voice. "The place has a great many painful associations. But I will tell him that you are prepared to give him a welcome. You know that he is a father to Beatrice and myself."

"We know it," Dorothy answered; "and we wish that we had done him justice sooner. You must forgive two lonely old women for all their many mistakes."

Beatrice and her husband did not long leave Mr. Corder alone at Kensington. They persuaded him to come with them to a quiet watering-place on the south coast, where they might listen to the song of the waves in peace.

It was a place little patronised by tourists, for Southsea, with its military splendours, and its endless attractions of bands, beauties, and all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, was not far off. But Godwin had seen quite enough of pomps and vanities; Mr. Corder had never cared a straw about them; and Beatrice was too happy to want to be amused. It was sufficient for her that Godwin noticed every detail of her pretty summer costumes, and gave his gravest attention to the arrangement of ribbons and laces. Nor was Mr. Corder one whit behind his adopted son in the matter of taste; and Mrs. Godwin was wont to declare laughingly that she lived in an atmosphere of criticism.

"It only needs the Count to complete the trio," she said one afternoon when they were all sitting on the beach. "You three men are always interfering with me in the most arbitrary way. As to the Count, I know by his eyes, before he speaks, whether he approves of a bonnet or a gown. Never was a woman so fettered by men's opinions as I am!"

"I shudder to think what you would be without us," said Godwin, propping himself on his elbow and regarding her gravely. "If you were left to yourself you would break out into gorgeous colours, such as 'make the rash gazer wipe his eye!' You have a sneaking love for vivid red, and if I hadn't wrestled with you at Marshall and Snelgrove's you would have been sitting under a flamingo sunshade at this moment."

"It had such a charming handle," murmured Beatrice regretfully.

The two men laughed; and someone, walking along the beach at that moment, heard the laughter and caught sight of the happy group. How perfectly those three understood each other! These three lives—how blissfully they mingled, and flowed on in one stream of content! He felt just then the loneliness of his own life as he had not felt it for some time. Why was it that he was always doomed to look on and see others enjoying the very blessings that he had craved?

This was not a very heroic mood, but the best and noblest souls are often the prey of Giant Despair. In the next instant Beatrice looked up and met his fixed, dreamy gaze.

She answered that gaze with a bright smile and hands outstretched in welcome. Ah! he might read her heart, for it was full of gratitude for her friend's true fidelity and kindness. She loved him, and would always love him, with that pure sisterly love which confers a dignity on him upon whom it is bestowed. And he might openly accept this affection without doing wrong to any human being.

After all, there are royal consolations for those who have stood the test of the "cleansing fires." The baser part of their love has been burned away, and it is the baser part of love which causes the worst suffering. You have no claim to be called a true lover, says one poet:

> "Unless you can love as the angels may,
> With the breadth of heaven betwixt you."

And although he had his rare moments of repining, Count Gliska had truly learnt the highest way of loving.

"I have been speaking of you," Beatrice cried. "How good it is to see you here!"

"Very good," said Godwin heartily; and Mr. Corder added his word of welcome.

Their warmth thawed the ice that had been gathering round Gliska's heart. A minute ago he had felt himself lonely, unloved, forgotten; now he sat down on the shingle with the little group, and knew that they were one with him in spirit.

The sea, deep blue under the cloudless sky of August, lay asleep in the afternoon sun. Here and there gleamed a white sail; now and then the silvery wings of a gull flashed across the sapphire waste. They were sitting on the shady side of a boat-house, and Beatrice had gathered a great variety of small possessions around her. The young matron was far more luxurious than the girl had been, and her husband and adopted father were always buying her presents and doing their utmost to spoil her. There was a long strip of satin, on which she was embroidering gorgeous silken flowers; and there was he most dainty work-case that ever was seen, fitted up with golden implements that might have belonged to Miss Kilmansegg. Added to these there were a costly shawl, a fan, a cut-glass bottle of Cologne

water with a golden top, and a bunch of freshly-gathered roses. With these belongings conveniently strewed about on the shingle, it was very easy for a well-disposed young woman to get through a long summer morning.

Gliska smiled as he noted all her little luxuries. He was looking at her, and thinking what a beautiful face she had, and how sweet an expression it wore in repose. Life had been kind to her; the desires of her heart were granted; for her there were no wasting years of patient loneliness. And yet there were multitudes of women, as good and fair as she was, who were destined to endure that slow decay which has been well called "the lingering asphyxia of soul." Even in this quiet watering-place could be found scores of girls who had never walked on the sunny side of life. A few yards off, sitting on the beach, and looking out with weary eyes across the calm sea, there was a woman, still young and still comely, who was tired of asking herself Mr. Mallock's sad question. The answer that her heart gave her was always—no.

"You have not yet told us what brought you hither," said Beatrice, taking advantage of a pause in the men's talk. "Why did you not write and say you were coming, Count? Then you would have given us the pleasure of expectation."

"You have pleasures enough," he answered, smiling. "When the cup is full, what matters one little drop more?"

"How unkind you are!" she cried, with eyes full of reproach. "You are trying to assume airs of unimportance. A little swagger would please us a great deal better; we don't believe in your utter unconsciousness of your own value."

Those few half-jesting, half-earnest words restored Gliska's faith in himself and in the love of his friends. They were spoken with that indescribable charm of playfulness which is only possessed by women who have seen much of the world, or by the favoured few who are gifted naturally with perfect tact. Half the women who utter such words are unaware of the full influence of their graceful little speeches; they make them because it is their business in life to be pleasant to men. But Beatrice was prompted by the instinct of affection, and it gladdened her to see Gliska's brightening face.

"You have not answered my question," she went on. "No mysteries, please! As Harriet would say, 'I can't abide them.'"

"I will answer you willingly enough, Beatrice," said Gliska, with one of his gentle looks. "We have done with mysteries in our lives. Well, I am on my way to Portsmouth, and my errand there is soon told."

"I did not know you had any friends in Portsmouth," she said, with awakening interest.

"I have not. But in an old cemetery near the town there is a grave that I wish to see. It is my father's grave."

Beatrice gave her husband a quick glance, and laid her hand on his arm.

"Count," she said earnestly, "you will let us go with you, will you not? You must not be left alone any more with the past. If you are going to tread old paths, let your friends walk by your side."

He looked at her, smiled gravely, and shook his head.

"No, no, Beatrice; I cannot take you and Godwin to such a dismal place. Enjoy your summer holidays, my child, and store up pleasant memories for the winter."

"Do you think I am only fit to live in the sun?" she asked. "A friend is but half a friend if you cannot invite him to walk with you in the shade."

"I believe you will have to yield to her, Gliska," said Godwin. "She has set her mind upon this thing. When do you intend to go to Portsmouth?"

"This evening," replied the Count. But he was hardly allowed to finish his brief sentence; Mr. Corder, Godwin and Beatrice joined in an outburst of expostulation. Why had he come to look at them if he meant to run away at once? What had they done to deserve so little of his society?

"You shall stay here all night, and we will go to Portsmouth with you to-morrow," said Mrs. Earle, with a pretty imperiousness that cloaked a deeper feeling. "You shall wait and see the sunset on the waters, and then we will sing old songs in the dusk. Let us have a really romantic evening for once—just such an evening as a poet would have immortalised."

And Gliska yielded, as Godwin had foreseen; and Beatrice, happy in getting her own way, went off to their hotel, impatient for afternoon tea.

The three men followed her lazily, across the shingle, and up the terrace steps to the gaudy building known as the "Grand," and made as brilliant as possible with touches of red and blue. Strong colouring, and plenty of white lace curtains, gave the "Grand" the look of a first-class doll's house; and it was so evidently a summer abode that one almost suspected it of being run up afresh, by an enterprising builder, every spring. Nobody could picture it standing here all the winter, to face the bitter north-easter, and the driving rain or snow.

Inside, it was more comfortable than its pretentiousness would have led one to suppose. The Earles' sitting-room looked delightfully fresh and cool; there were flowers on all the tables; the light was subdued; and books and easy chairs abounded. One of the best of these seats stood in a flowery corner between the piano and a window, and here it was that Beatrice installed Count Gliska.

"I don't sing as well as I used to do," she said, in her simple, frank way. "Why is it, I wonder? I think it must be, Count, because you are not near to inspire me. Godwin says I have lost all pathos."

"Is not that the natural consequence of being perfectly contented?"

Gliska asked. "There is a certain kind of yearning which finds its genuine expression in pathetic music."

"Godwin said something of the same kind," Beatrice answered. "And he said, too, that I should never have made a good actress. I never can forget myself, and my own individual joys, and become somebody else, whose life is a tragedy."

"Thank God you have little to do with tragedies in your life," said Gliska softly.

His eyes followed her with grave satisfaction as she moved across the room to the tea-table. The roses that she wore seemed to be a part of herself, and to live longer with her than with anyone else. Her husband had gathered the flowers, and fastened them upon her gown with his own hand; and as Gliska looked at them he thought of the chrysanthemums that she had worn on a bygone winter day.

Later on, when the sun was setting over the sea, the Count played some of her old favourite melodies, and sang old songs as the light faded. His voice had lost none of its power and sweetness, and to his listeners it seemed that every note was—

> "Full of hope and yet of heart-break,
> Full of all the tender pathos
> Of the here and the hereafter."

When he ceased, they sat near the open window, and watched the liquid gold on the sea fade slowly into grey. Then they talked of many things—of Madame Valerot in her convent; of those who had no longer a fatherland or a home; and of all the strange chances and changes that bring people together, even from the ends of the earth, and make them work out each other's destinies.

And, somehow, the three who sat and talked with Gliska that summer night felt his influence lingering with them when they went to rest. His noble patience, his calm endurance of wrongs and sorrows, greater than most men have had to bear, impressed them more deeply than ever.

"In the present day," said Mr. Corder to his children, "when men are always bawling about their grievances, it does me good to meet that man. There are certain injuries which will never be redressed in this world; losses which no expenditure of public money will ever make good; great acts of wickedness and injustice, for which all the Governments on earth can never offer compensation. But it is only here and there that we meet with a man who has suffered such wrongs as these; and it is precisely these mighty sufferers who possess their souls in strength and silence."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONCLUSION.

One of our living novelists has described the Portsmouth of thirty years ago; and everyone who has read "By Celia's Arbour" will remember the indescribable charm that seems to linger about the old seaport town of the story. But even Mr. Besant's magical pen could scarcely invest the Portsmouth of to-day with the romantic quaintness which belonged entirely to its past. Great improvements are the enemies of the picturesque; and Beatrice (who knew all about Celia and her lovers) was disappointed that she could not find the old tree-shaded wall and moats, although she had been told that they were swept away.

"It was in the town of those days that Count Gliska's father lived," Mr. Corder said to her in a low voice. "He lived on the tenpence a day granted by our Government to the refugees; and he earned a little, I think, by teaching languages. Some of these men got situations in the town, and were proved to be thoroughly trustworthy and good. And there are many among the townsfolk who remember their quiet lives and kindly ways. Very few of them lived to old age, and very few ever returned to Poland."

The place to which Gliska led his friends was a cemetery situated in the northern suburb of the town. It had a dismal, pillared entrance, and on one side there was a little tomb-like lodge for the chaplain.

The long vista of the middle walk ended in a dull brick wall, above which the masts of collier brigs appeared. The monuments were chiefly of the kind that Mr. Pugin justly hated; flaming urns, broken columns, and inverted torches were to be seen on all sides; and the ground was little better than a wilderness, where flowers, once cultivated, mingled freely with long grass and weeds. Forget-me-nots and London-pride flourished in a wild and ragged fashion; batchelors' buttons flaunted here and there, and wallflowers started up between heads of white clover. It was a cosmopolitan burying-ground, where people of divers faiths were laid to rest. On the right a husband mourned, on stone, in rigid Puritan terms, for a beloved and virtuous wife (somehow all the wives were beloved and virtuous); and on the left an inscription implored you of your charity to pray for the souls of certain good Catholics. The cypress, untrimmed and untended, lifted its solemn plumes in the still summer air; laburnums dropped their showers of gold; and two or three children, strolling along the walk, had gathered a wild posy.

In silence the Count led the way along the centre path, never pausing till he came to the very end. And there under the spreading boughs of a noble plane, which made that unlovely spot a fair green bower, they found the stone they sought.

Only a plain upright stone: there were no carvings here; no sentimental rhymes; no hackneyed bits of Holy Writ. The delicate leaf-shadows and golden lights flickered over the black letters as they read the few brief words—

In Memory of
CASIMIR GLISKA,
A Polish Refugee,
Who died at Portsea, November 17, 18—,
Aged 46 years.

"Does this place sadden you?" the Count asked quietly, as he turned to the girl who stood mute by his side. "I hope not, Beatrice, for it is good to have my true friends with me here."

"I am not sad," she answered, looking up with steady eyes; "and I am glad to be anywhere with you."

"Then promise me," he went on, gently but earnestly, as if he were telling his heart's deepest wish at last—"promise that you will come here again one day when a second name is added to that stone; promise that you will bring your children here, and speak to them of the exiles that sleep below. Teach them to be tender and considerate, as you have ever been, to those who have no country and no home. Teach them to be gentle to the beaten men whose fatherland is only a memory now; and to bear in their hearts that prayer which your Church prays for all that are desolate and oppressed. Aye, and to march shoulder to shoulder with their own countrymen, and to feel always that every one—even the poorest—is a brother, not to be despised, not to be overlooked or undervalued. You will promise me this?"

"I do promise, solemnly," she replied in a low tone. There were tears on her cheeks, but her voice was calm and steadfast.

"Just a little more," he said, "and I have done. Beatrice, it is your wish, and the wish of your husband, that I should spend the rest of my life near your home. But when that life is done, will you see that they lay me here in my father's grave? I would have no longer inscription graven on the stone; I want only that my name should stand beneath his—my own true name of Casimir Gliska."

THE END.

TEMPORA MUTANTUR.

TEMPORA MUTANTUR ! with laughter
We utter the words in our youth.
Before the swift years coming after
Have taught us to sigh at their truth,
Or shaken our first self-reliance,
How gaily they trip o'er the tongue ;
We set the whole world at defiance,
What time we are headstrong and young.

Wise cautions from grandsire or pater,
Not seldom we hold them in scorn ;
Till we learn with a groan or two later
The wit of experience born ;
By juvenile ardour impassioned,
Such wisdom we're apt to decry,
And dubbing their notions old-fashioned,
Tempora mutantur reply.

But ah, when life's early romances
Are lost in a homely routine ;
When facts prove more stubborn than fancies,
And youth is a thing that has been ;
We set to a melody minor
The burden so joyous before,
And murmur with sympathies finer,
Tempora mutantur once more.

Just think of that grove where we faltered
Love's tender confession and vow ;
Aye, truly the times must have altered—
We'd simply catch cold in it now.
No longer in lithe adolescence
We waltz through the night with a will ;
A twinge from some gouty excrescence
Mars even the sober quadrille.

Then alack for the loves and the graces,
For spring and its beauty divine,
For smiles upon dear vanished faces,
Which gladdened the days of "lang syne."
Yet autumn hath hours that are pleasant,
And blessings around us are cast ;
Thank God for the peace of the present,
Thank God for the joy of the past.

SYDNEY GREY.

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The Argosy

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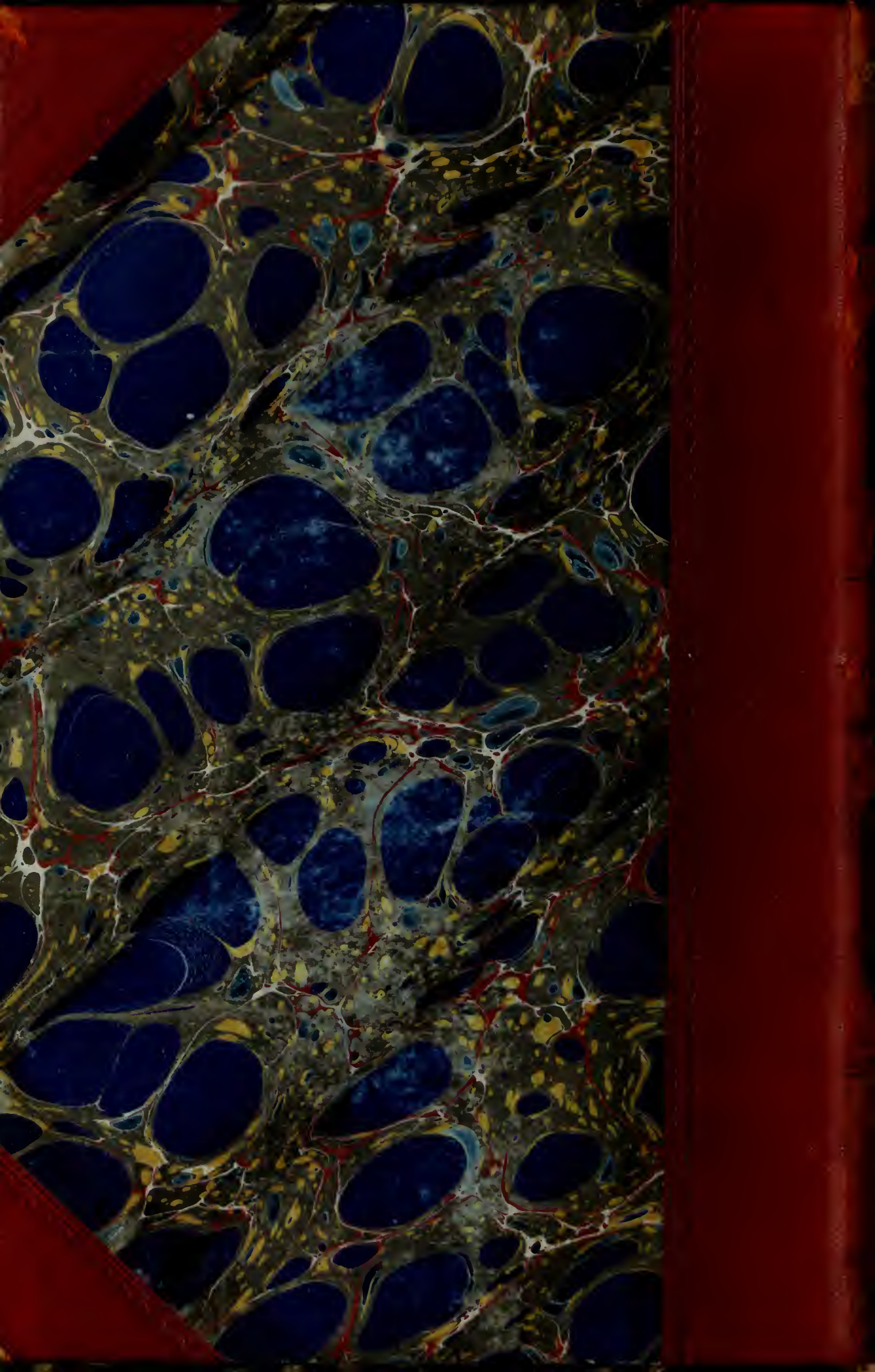
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